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LADY GAGA p.75 / HANNIBAL BURESS p.20 / PABLO PICASSO p.78 / SCHUMER & APATOW p.86

The Deli-Bag Culture Wars By Adam Sternbergh p.30 / Baseball Espionage By Will Leitch p.11 / Trapped in Qatar By Robert Kolker p.38

NEW YORK

“How do I live free in this black body?”

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By Benjamin Wallace-Wells



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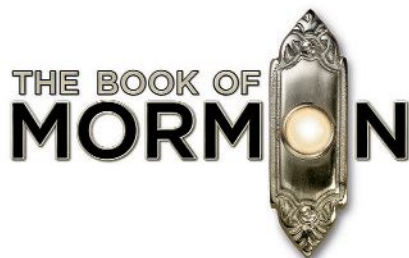


THE NEW YORK TIMES BEN BRANTLEY

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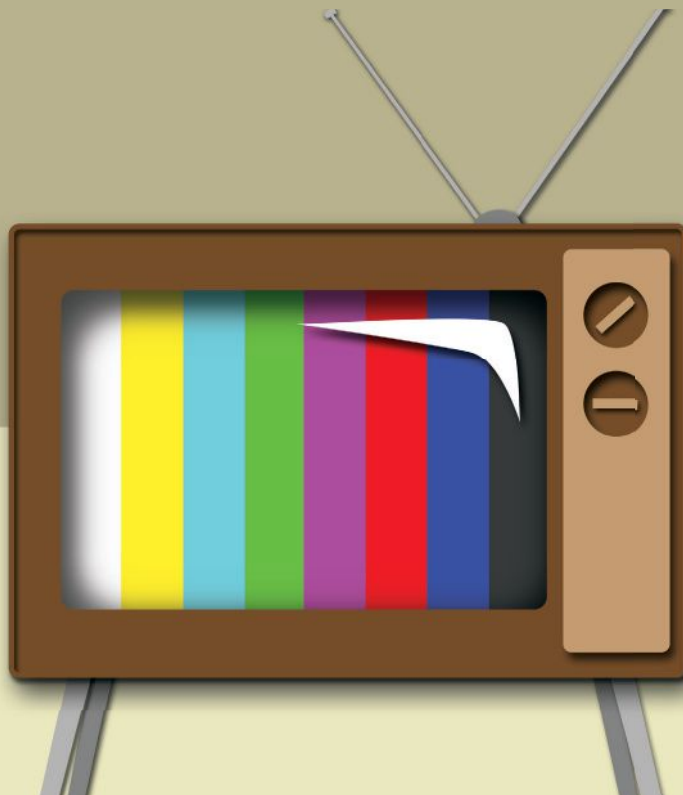
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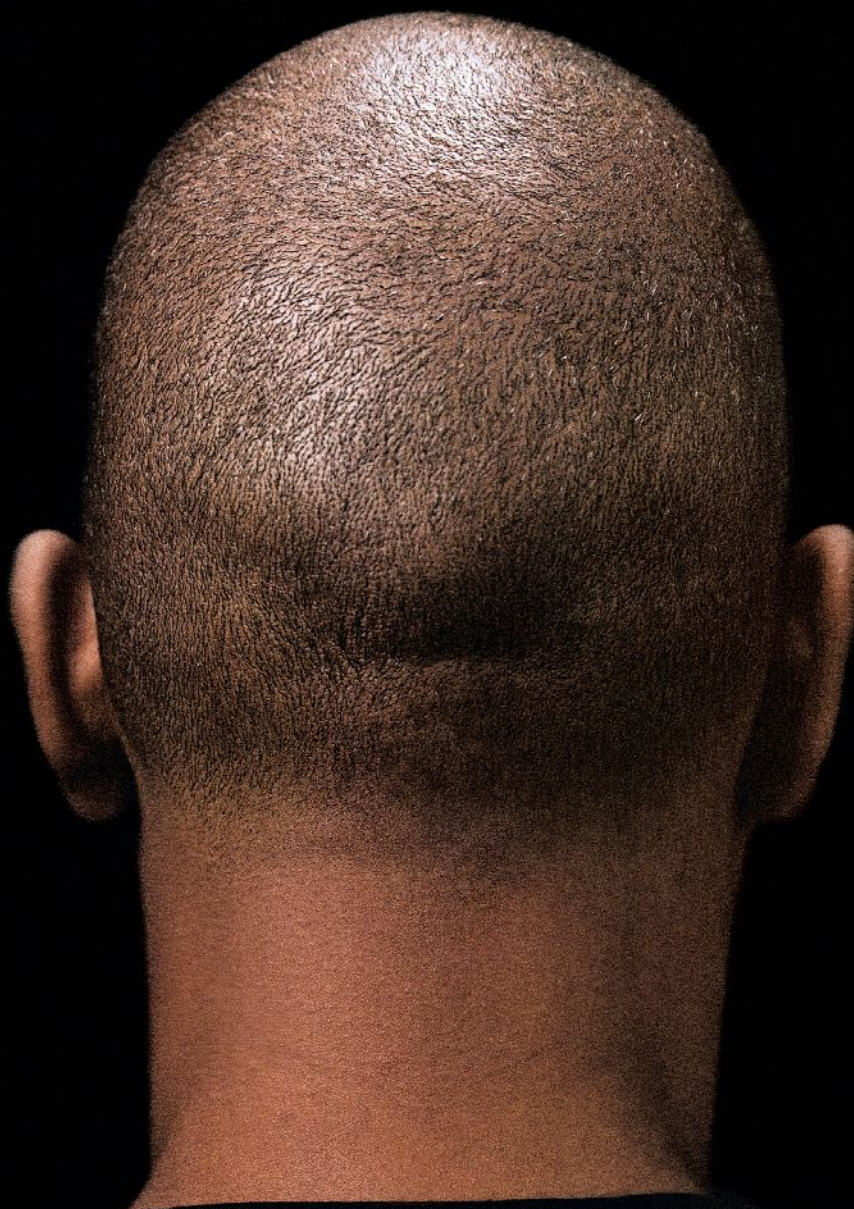
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NEW YORK

JULY 13-26, 2015

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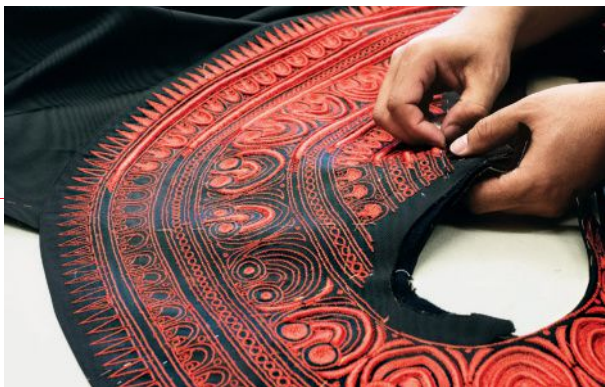
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BY YÜSSEF EL GÜNDI DIRECTED BY CHRIS COLEMAN

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Comments



1 Last issue's cover, a collaboration between *New York Magazine* and The Marshall Project, described the everyday realities of New York City's largest jail through the stories of the people who live and work there ("Rikers Island, Population 9,790," June 29-July 12). Readers were shocked by many of the revelations. "I just learned from NYMag that Rikers Island has four times as many people as my hometown of Bloomfield, IN," wrote reader Keith Roach. "We are guilty of brute complacency," tweeted Elizabeth Sackler. "Harrowing read," wrote Isabella David McCaf. "Our current prison system is inhumane to prisoner & guard alike." "This NYMag/Marshall Project article on Rikers is too much to process," added Twitter user Emily Singer. "A lawless place under the guise of the law." One commenter argued that improving conditions at Rikers would have to begin with the guards. **"Anyone who wants to change the system at Rikers Island should look at the way the guards are chosen, paid, and supported,"** simone818 wrote. "It's a terrible job with few perks. So, let's pay these people more, give them more psychological support (from professionals), and focus on what we can do to make their lives better. If guards are better treated, inmates will benefit as well." The *New York Times*' Fernanda Santos was impressed with the project's nuance and evenhandedness. "I came away conflicted,"

Santos wrote, “because the story did what great stories do: It made me see Rikers from all perspectives.”

2 “The revolution—it may not be too strong a term,” wrote Jonathan Chait in his column on the Supreme Court’s decision affirming marriage equality, “has been driven by elected officials and judges, and from the broader culture, the three strands all reinforcing one another” (“**Not Since the ‘60s,**” **June 29–July 12**). Commenters debated whether a backlash to the social progress Chait identified was inevitable. “Look at *Roe v. Wade*—great decision—and access to abortion gets more and more restricted,” argued rgqueen. But howard.roark thought marriage equality would avoid that fate. “**Acceptance of gay people keeps rising, and there’s no sign of it declining** ... Abortion on the other hand is a very difficult situation even for many people who support a woman’s right to access.” And many readers simply flocked to the comments section to celebrate the decision. “Bravo America!” wrote HarlemGurl. “Bravo!!! #lovewins.”

3 “A lot of people trying to get from point A to point B see more similarities than differences between Lyft and Uber. This has helped make the rivalry between black and pink among the most heated in San Francisco: a big-moneyed battle for ride-sharing supremacy in which one participant is conspicuously over-matched,” wrote Annie Lowrey in her feature on the two ride-sharing services (“**We’re No. 2!**,” **June 29–July 12**). Readers, too, had strong opinions about which service would ultimately take the market. “If Uber can consistently offer more reliable service at similar rates,” wrote commenter Classicist, “it is going to win and no amount of corporate parties geared toward creating ‘a community of drivers and passengers’ can stop that.” Commenter Wakeful agreed that Lyft’s friendliness gambit could backfire: “One of the big reasons I chose Uber over Lyft ... is **that whole ‘get a ride from your buddy’ thing. It creeped me out** ... I don’t want to fist-bump someone.” Lyft’s supporters pointed to Uber’s bad press. “In SF, at least, Uber’s terrible PR and awful exec goals make it clear that they’re looking for a profit at all costs,” argued hunterterrible. “Lyft, at least, seems to support both drivers and riders.” Commenter deepak.thomas picked out another bright spot for Lyft. “**‘Nearly half of Lyft’s top executives are women.’ Isn’t that cause for cheer?’**”

➔ Send correspondence to comments@nymag.com. Or go to nymag.com to respond to individual stories.



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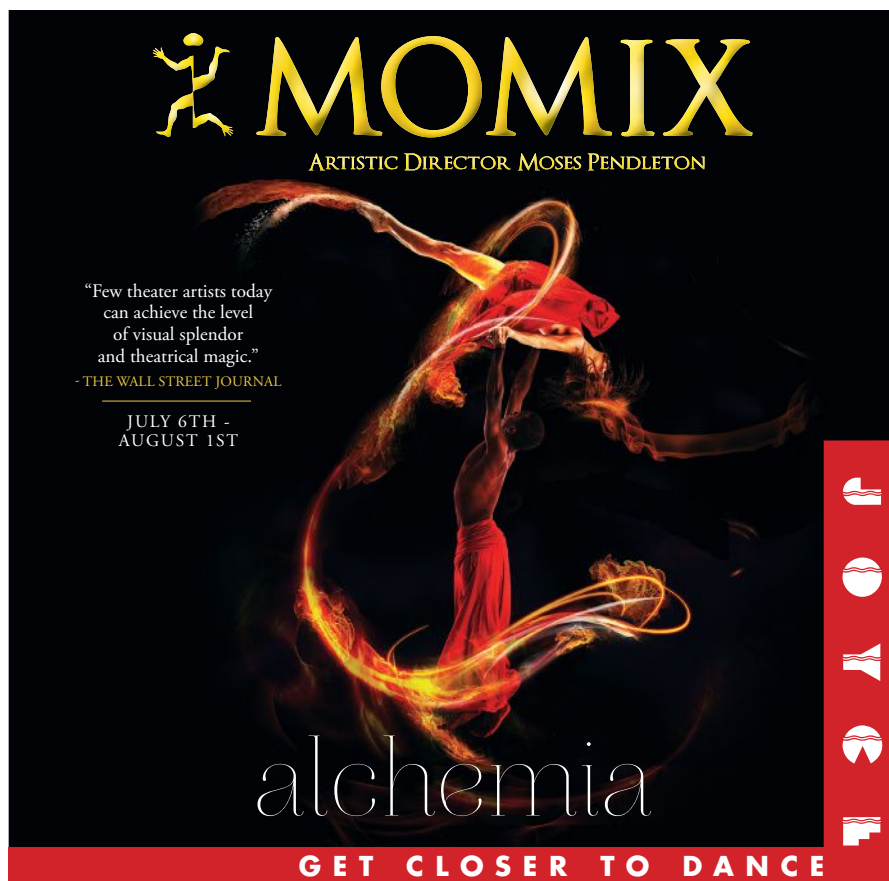
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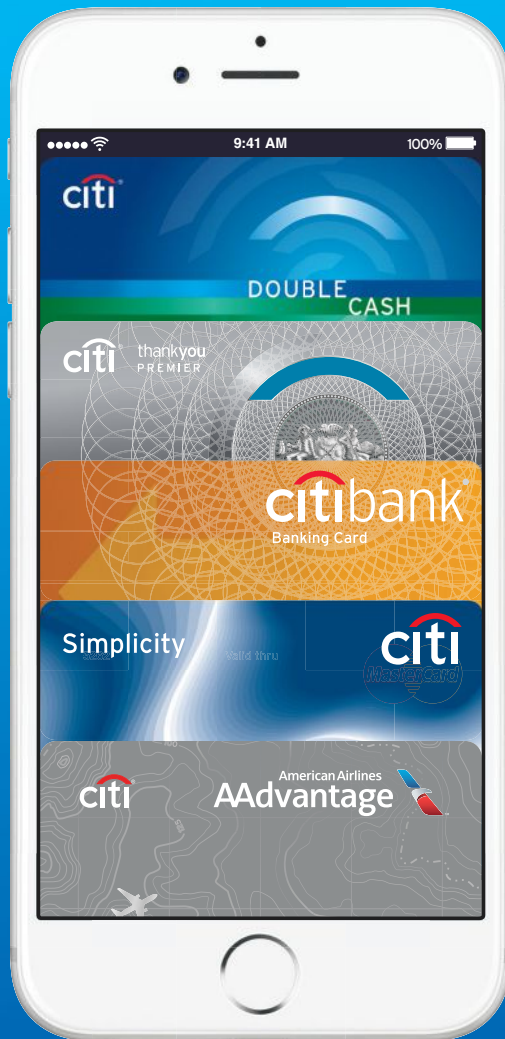
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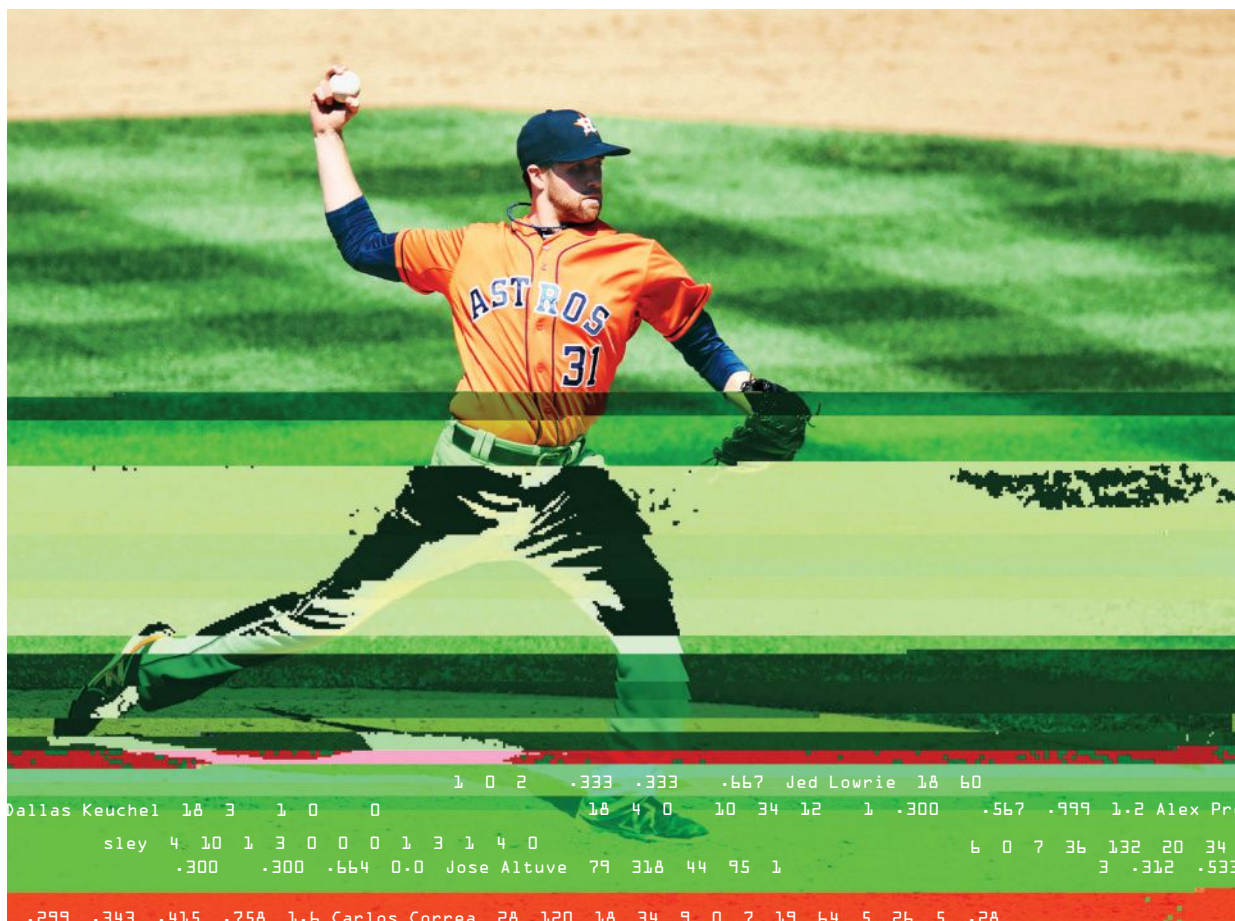
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Intelligencer

INSIDE: *The good life at 100-plus* / *Maureen O'Connor on yet another sexual negotiation* / *Hannibal Buress buys meat*



Games: Will Leitch

Scout versus Scout
The Cardinals' hacking scandal has brought the sports world into the surveillance era.

YOU MAY HAVE HEARD about the Great Baseball Hacking Scandal of 2015—the St. Louis Cardinals' front office breaking into the Houston Astros' computer system and getting busted by the FBI (though no one has yet been charged or convicted).

Among fans, this has been played mostly for laughs, an opportunity for a put-down. I'm a Cards fan, and in the wake of the scandal, I keep hearing from New England Patriots fans, still stung from the Spygate and Deflategate scandals that have made Bill Belichick and Tom Brady Public Enemies Nos. 1 and 2, who really want me to know they feel my pain. *Just turn heel. Accept that everyone hates you. Be fueled by their tears.* It's always a bad sign when Bostonians approach bearing unsolicited advice, and I try to tell them, no, their scandals are much worse than mine. But I'm lying, to them and myself. Mine's worse. And mine's going to change sports in far vaster ways than some stupid air let out of some stupid footballs.

Let's back up for a second. Over the past 30 years, the *Moneyball* revolution and the dominance of statistics and analytic thought have altered the way we watch baseball to the point that you have to sort of remind yourself to have a good time at a regular-season game. If advanced baseball theory has taught us anything, it is that one game absolutely does not matter. Every game, every inning, every out, every pitch, falls into what the world of baseball considers "small sample size"—just another bit of data thrown into the yawning pit of Analysis. Performances that used to play as heroic are now dismissed as freak accidents. And those peanuts, the Cracker Jacks, the seventh-inning stretch, all that crap you used to do with your dad, they're just quaint accoutrements to a data set, the result of this one game merely a deviation destined to regress to the norm over time. So, you know, play ball!

I embrace this new world of baseball thought; those stats guys are actually right about nearly everything, and no one's advocating going back to pretending the sun revolves around us. But it still requires a sort of emotional adjustment. And it has changed the way the game is played and perceived by those on the field, even those far away from front-office quantitative experts. Lately, it has done this namely in the aspect of cheating.

See, the big news from the hacking scandal is that, after a century or more of semi-comic continuity (Phil Niekro scuffling balls with an emery board, Graig Nettles stuffing his bat with six Super Balls, Albert Belle sending Jason Grimsley into the umpire's room to retrieve his confiscated corked bat), cheating has changed, too. Remember, on-field cheating has been a part of baseball as long as there has *been* baseball. You can trace that history from the rascals who played the game in its infancy (many of whom were criminals) to the legacies of some Hall of Famers (Gaylord Perry, who admits throwing a spitter his entire career) to signature moments in the sport's history (it has been rumored for decades that Bobby Thomson might have been tipped off by a sign stealer before he homered to win the 1951 pennant for the New York Giants). But these days, PED hysteria aside, what used to be seen as a scandal is now considered almost archaic old-school silliness—less a desire for competitive advantage and more a breaking of the unwritten rules governing sportsmanship and decorum. When Yankees pitcher Michael Pineda was ejected for pitching with the help of a "foreign substance" earlier this year, the opposing Red Sox weren't mad that he used it. They were angry that they could see it. "Put it on your hat, put it on your pants, your belt, put it on your glove—whatever you have to do," Boston catcher A. J. Pierzynski said. "No one has an issue with him doing it; it's just more of the fact that it's so blatant." Players agree that cheating on the field can't change much. They'd just rather everyone not see it so obviously.

Baseball has always involved cheating, because everything always involves cheating; this is America, after all. What the hacking scandal shows is that baseball is only tangentially played on the field anymore. No one cares, not really, if a player steals a sign or puts too much pine tar on his bat; all that's just a small sample size. Information is more powerful than a home run: Information is countless home runs. Baseball is now run by Harvard M.B.A.'s and tech geeks and quantitative analysts holding proprietary information for companies that, oh, by the way, are

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**JOHN
MCGRAW**
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TY COBB
(1905–1928)
Sharpened his
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**BOBBY
THOMSON**
(1946–1960)
Hit the "Shot
Heard Round
the World"
with the
benefit of
stolen signs.

**WHITEY
FORD**
(1950–1967)
Cut ball with
his wedding
ring; also
heaped mud,
baby oil,
turpentine,
and rosin on it.

DON SUTTON
(1966–1988)
Accused
of scuffling the
ball with
sandpaper; he
avoided
suspension
by threatening
to sue.

**GRAIG
NETTLES**
(1967–1988)
Stuffed his
bat with
Super Balls.

**PAUL
MOLITOR**
(1978–1998)
With
teammate
Robin Yount,
a sign-stealing
legend.

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PEDs for a second?*

worth billions of dollars. The game really unfolds in those algorithms, the stat-heads say. Which themselves unfold in computers. Which are therefore just begging to be hacked.

Now, it needs to be made clear that we don't know yet exactly what kind of hacking the Cardinals were doing. The Feds are still sorting out the details, but according to one theory, the "breach" has less to do with stealing trade secrets than with sticking it to your boss: two low-level employees eager to embarrass Houston Astros general manager Jeff Luhnow (who used to work for the Cardinals and is said to have been disliked by many of his co-workers) by leaking ugly information to Deadspin. Some Cardinals flunkies found some old passwords, used them to root around the Astros database, got caught, and will end up being fired and/or prosecuted. The team fired scouting director Chris Correa for accessing the Astros database without authorization, but he says he didn't take anything, and the incident appears to be independent of the FBI investigation. None of this proves the Cardinals were cheaters. It could just mean they employ some morons.

What matters more is what an experienced, nefarious hacker could have done. To paraphrase *The Social Network*, knowing a pitcher is going to throw a curveball because you saw the sign isn't cool; knowing an entire opponent's evaluation of every player in baseball, that's cool. The sport is dominated these days by supersmart people evaluating every player, every pitch, for every possible advantage. The Astros' central database is so advanced, so critical to the team's sense of organizational direction, that management has given it a code name: "Ground Control." The system contains "the repository of all our baseball knowledge," as Luhnow put it to Joshua Green of Bloomberg; every bit of information the Astros had was funneled to Ground Control, from in-house evaluations of the team's own players and others throughout the game to conversations with other teams about trade possibilities. This is as complex as global war: To the Yankees, having access to a Red Sox database like this would be the equivalent of the U.S. having Russia's nuclear codes.

Thinking of these vulnerabilities only in terms of player evaluation is limiting your imagination, since every organization does its work almost entirely online now. And that's just as true outside of baseball. You know how NFL coaches cover their mouths when they call plays and make sure the clipboard with all their plays on it is constantly hidden from view? They do that because they're justifiably paranoid: They would strangle the family dog if it would give them a slight blocking mismatch on a trap play. Well, every team has its plays online somewhere; imagine being able, with the touch of a mouse, to know every play the opponent is going to run. (It'd be like calling the right defensive play in the old Tecmo Bowl.) That's just the start. How about knowing another team's budget? Its salary-cap situation? Its offers on free agents you're competing with it for? There's nothing you couldn't find out and use. It makes all other forms of cheating in sports, from sign-stealing to PEDs, look comically dated. It's a whole new planet.

Even if it was just some bored, stoned interns, the Cardinals' breach has cracked open Pandora's box. Think of it as drone warfare: People far away from the action fighting on far-off terrain. There are no rules in this war. They must wonder why we even need the battlefield at all. ■

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Centenarians who
don't act their age.

BY ALEXA TSOULIS-REAY

A BROOKLYN WOMAN named Susannah Mushatt Jones recently became the world's oldest person, one of just two living souls born in the 19th century. On July 6, she turned 116. Her stock answer to the secret of longevity is delightful and, you'd hope, replicable: She eats four slices of bacon every morning.

Jones today is fragile, her hearing and eyesight limited. But the quality of life of centenarians—and supercentenarians, those over 110—varies dramatically, owing to luck, genes, and lifestyle. About a third of 100-year-olds (according to a Danish study) don't need any help with mobility. In America, about 35 percent live on their own. The photographer Sally Peterson has set out to make portraits of as many active members of the century crew as she can, and—as you'll see on these pages—both their past and present are enviable.

Photographs by Sally Peterson



Zilpha Nowlin

101, *former school-bus driver*

BORN: July 14, 1913

LIVES IN: San Fernando Valley, California

"I swim every day! But only if the water is 90 degrees—we have eight solar panels on the roof just for the pool. Until last year I would hand-crank the pool cover off every time. Now I have an electronic one."



Milton Quon

101, artist and animator
(on *Dumbo* and other films)
BORN: August 22, 1913
LIVES IN: Torrance, California

"When they screened *Fantasia*, I was in the theater, and you could hear an ominous noise—it was the first commercial use of surround sound."
Any life advice? "A good wife and Chinese food. We have been married 70 years."



Donald W. Smitherman

101, retired psychologist
BORN: April 13, 1914
LIVES IN: Sun City, Arizona

"I do 20 push-ups and 20 sit-ups every morning. I used to play tennis, but I lost sight in one eye, so now I play golf, which is a lot more relaxing."



Estelle Levine

102, *homemaker and former boutique owner*

BORN: September 11, 1912

LIVES IN: Silver Spring, Maryland

"When I was young, I was too much of a goody-goody. I wanted to be a nurse, and my mother said it's too hard, too much training. I didn't defy her. Women mostly make up their own mind these days."



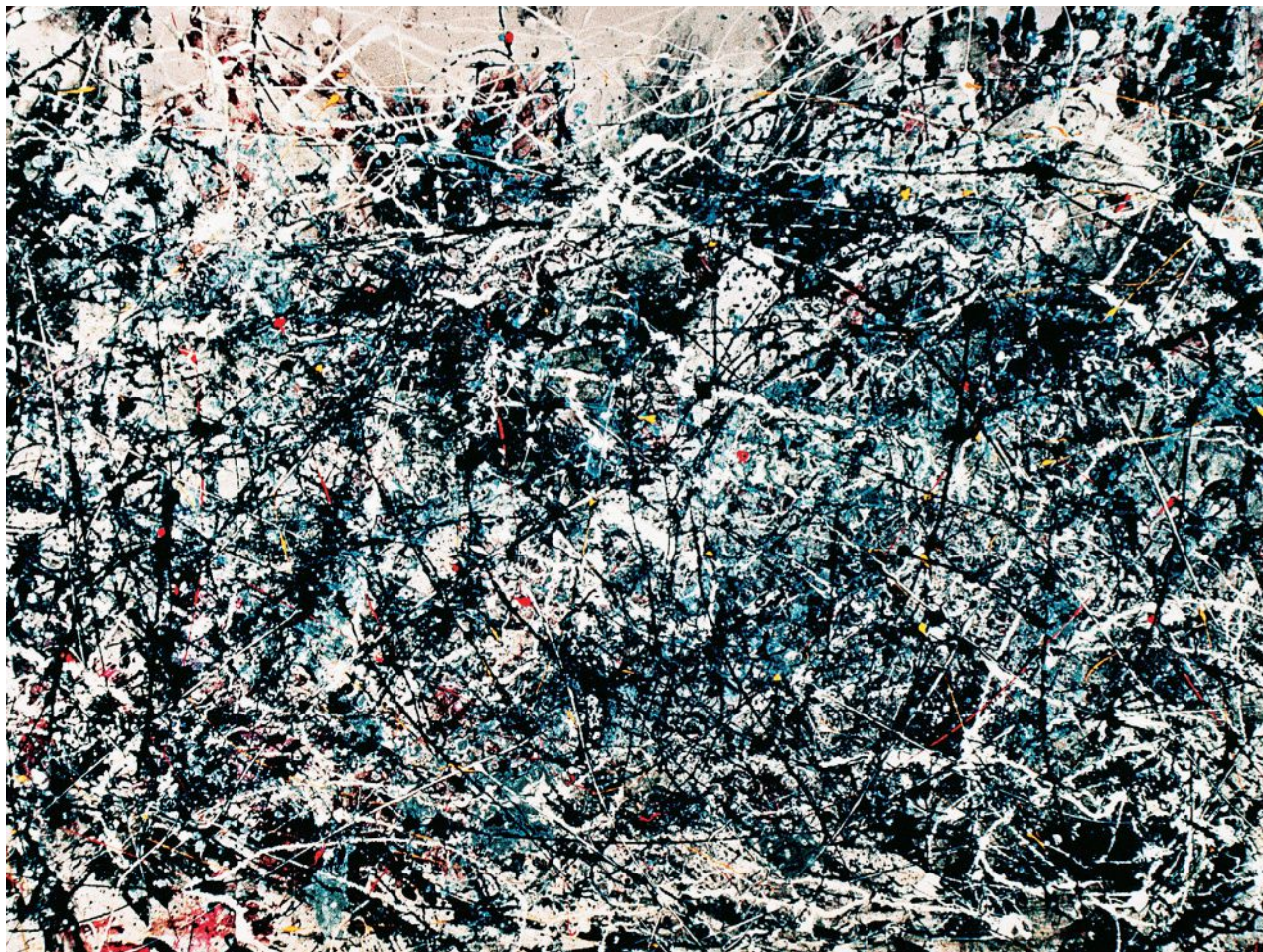
Norval L. Gill

100, *artist and graphic designer*

BORN: September 16, 1914

LIVES IN: South Pasadena, California

"When I was a child, it was right after World War I—we'd play warfare in the backyard, making little trenches and using matchsticks as soldiers. My mother kept saying, 'The next draft would have taken your father!'"



Sex Lives: Maureen O'Connor

Watch Out
Be warned: This
is a column
about ejaculation.

A NEWLY SINGLE MAN described a dilemma to me. “I was getting a blow job, and when the time came for me to finish, I was like, ‘Where do you want it?’ And he was like, ‘Wherever *you* want it!’ And I was like, ‘I want it where *you* want it.’ And he was like, ‘But *I* want it where *you* want it!’” In the polite confusion over the direction of his penis, he said, he’d somehow ended up with it pointed at his own face. Some of it shot into his mouth—an accidental, and impressively powerful, hole in one. “Oh my God,” I replied. “You were so polite you swallowed it for him. That is the most chivalrous cum-shot I have ever heard of.”

A successful sexual encounter will require many negotiations—some conducted explicitly, others through gesture and subtext. And while many negotiations are more fraught than where to come, few occur with such speed and urgency. (Or practical ramifications: “I let him do it on me because I don’t like doing laundry,” my friend Anne said of blow jobs conducted in bed. “But I already

shower.”) And though sex may require the management of any number of fluids—from people of any gender—this column will deal with the fluid that comes out of a penis during unprotected sex. This is a column about cum, and where it lands. (Note that, when it comes to the spelling of *cum*, I defer to the Strunk and White of filth, the *Vice* style guide. *Come* is the verb, *cum* the resulting substance.)

How did we get here? As a pornographic convention, the “money shot” rose to prominence in the age of *Deep Throat*. “Where the earlier short, silent stag films occasionally included spectacles of external ejaculation (in some cases inadvertently),” film historian Linda Williams writes in *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the “Frenzy of the Visible,”* “it was not until the early ’70s, with the rise of the hard-core feature, that the money shot assumed the narrative function of signaling the climax of a genital event.” Displaying the result of that climax also proved the sex was real. Subsequently, the money shot produced dozens of fetishes, with men ejaculating on every part of their partners’ bodies, and women finding increasingly novel ways to interact with it—licking it, drinking it, rubbing it on their bodies, letting it ooze from their orifices in front of high-def cameras. (That last one, known as “creampie,” has ruined a genre of dessert for me.) In pornography, these options are always portrayed as erotic choices. In reality, that’s only one part of the equation—pleasure must be balanced against pragmatism.

Of course, some object to switching from actual sex to what is essentially close-range masturbation, just to put on a show. “It’s like stopping in the middle of a meal to eat leftovers instead,” one married man said. But sometimes the meal isn’t available, or doesn’t appeal to both parties’ appetites. “I find swallowing gross,” the laundry-averse Anne explained. “I’m always afraid I’m going to gag. And spitting is worse because you have to hold it in your mouth.” “Come on my chest” is her more-alluring way of saying “not my mouth.”

“God, the last time I performed a blow job to completion? I don’t even remember,” another woman said. “I just hop on and have sex.” When I asked body-shot proponents to make a hierarchy of jizzed-upon body parts, the lists were divided between those optimized for cleanliness and those optimized for sexiness—neurotic versus erotic. Neurotics favored wide surfaces: stomach, back, buttock, chest. (“There’s a natural reservoir just above the butt,” a straight man said.) Erotics just wanted to jizz on stuff they liked. (“Abs if he has them,” said a gay man.) Straight men generally defaulted to whichever cleaved body part

That’s not degradation; that’s the echo chamber of desire.

was right-side-up at the time. (Tits or ass.) Coming into your own hand ranked last—an occasional physical necessity but generally no better than coming into a Kleenex or a pile of sheets. The face, however, was a wild card. Many people were surprised that it even came up. “Is it *ever* acceptable to ask for that?” asked a straight man who characterized the practice as “disgusting.” He’d assumed facials were an onscreen trope that never happens in reality—like that thing on TV when sexy lawyers switch from yelling at each other to making out.

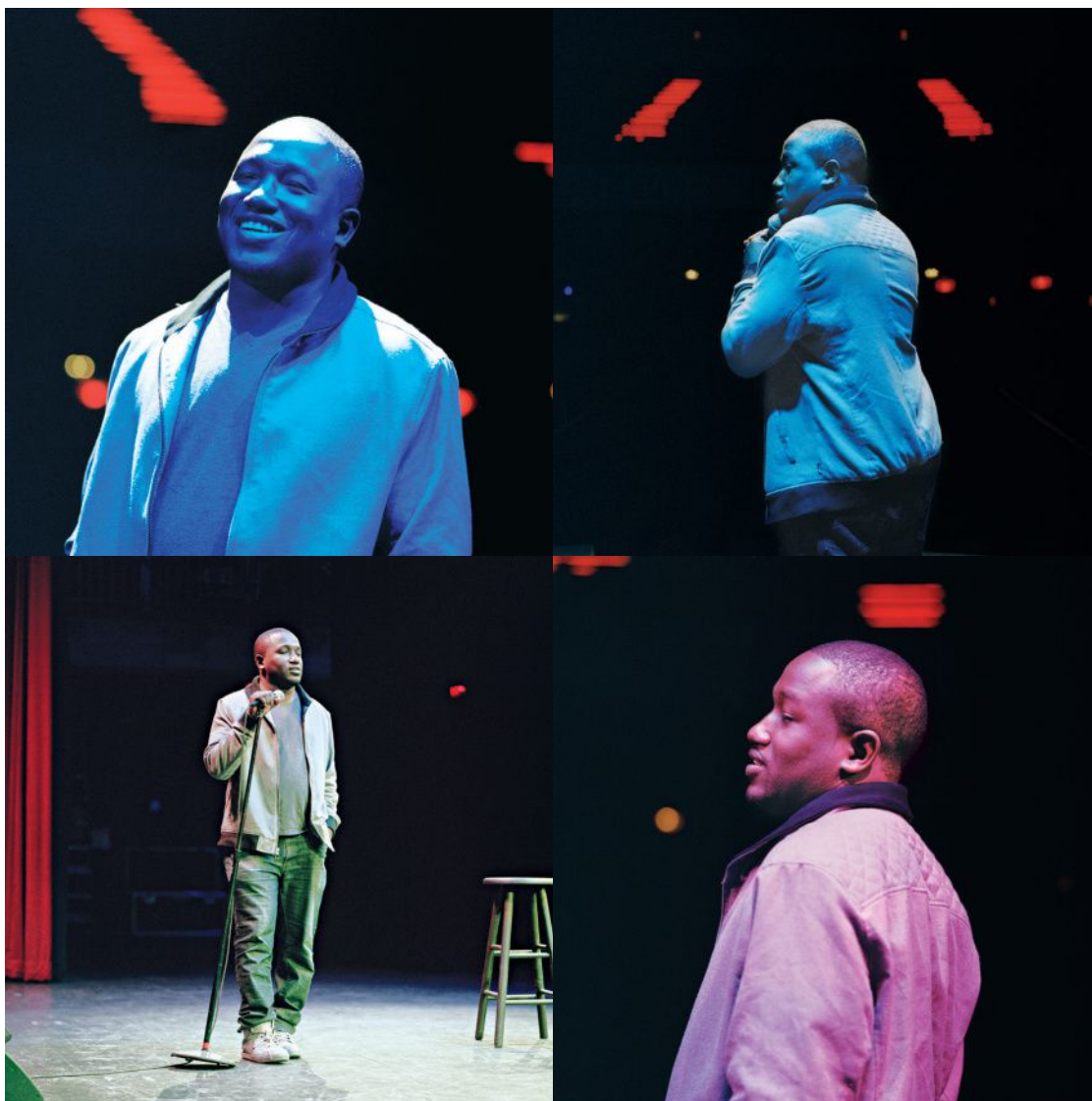
“Nobody *wants* the equivalent of when your under-eye cream gets jammed up in the tube, then spurts a huge glob all over your face,” my friend Sara argued in a Gchat. “I’m offended if they pick face over tits. On the tits, it’s like an offering: ‘I love your tits so much I want to shower them in cum.’ On the face it’s like, ‘I want to degrade you like the pornos I’ve seen.’ And afterward you sit there with your face scrunched up and eyes closed and wait until he brings you a tissue. You are really at his mercy.” Is this theoretical, I asked, or have you done it? “Oh, no guy has asked. But I’ve told them to. I assumed it would make them come sooner.” Another woman took a passively negative stance: “I wouldn’t be offended, just vaguely judgmental. It would make me think he had a porn addiction.” Even my friend Tessa, who likes to be tied up, spanked, and exhibited at orgies, considers facials a step too far: “No one’s ever done it to me. I used to find it wholly degrading. And still do. But now I also think it could be hot with the right power-play dynamic.”

Degradation does seem to be key. As Dan Savage famously wrote, “Facials are degrading—and that’s why they’re so hot.” On the other hand, several people who ranked their preferences for me said their rankings matched their partners’ desires. Knowing they were doing something that turned their partners on turned *them* on. That’s not degradation; that’s the echo chamber of desire.

Which does raise the question: If we accept that sex is a natural act, and sexual pleasure is not shameful, then why is the physical manifestation of male sexual pleasure assumed to be damning of those it touches? “I don’t feel degraded by any of it,” said Anne. “Sometimes I just want them to come, so, whatever works?” Writing on the topic of *bukkake*—the pornographic genre where multiple men masturbate onto one woman—smut anthropologists point out that whereas early Japanese versions featured passive and humiliated women, the American imitations usually showed ecstatic women who can’t get enough of it. When I texted an old hookup who often sexted about facials, he admitted that he rarely does them in reality. But, yes, he does it on occasion. So I asked, “Must the girl be like ‘I love it’? Is it still fun if she crinkles her face and is like, ‘Ew?’” “It’s only fun if she’s into it,” he said. But not too into it. “If you want to do it all the time, something’s wrong with you.” Talk about a catch-22.

Since the ’70s, anti-porn feminists have often singled out the money shot. “It is a convention of pornography that the sperm is on her, not in her,” Andrea Dworkin argued in 1993. “It marks the spot, what he owns and how he owns it. The ejaculation on her is a way of saying (through showing) that she is contaminated with his dirt; that she is dirty.” But, as Lisa Jean Moore points out in *Sperm Counts*, Dworkin ignores “that these actresses exhibit pleasure and that it is their pleasure that many of their male partners enjoy. It is perhaps more accurate to theorize that men, both as spectators and actors, want women to want their semen.” In Moore’s view, it’s not the woman’s humiliation, but her enthusiasm, that is so hot.

As a general principle, the notion that women should pretend to like things they actually find torturous is enraging. On an individual level, though, theoretical tortures become legitimate pleasures all the time, and constructs invented for the male gaze can become genuine pleasures for women—witness the girl-centric rebirth of burlesque, or modern women who persist in purchasing corsets because they like the aesthetic. The female jizz enthusiasts I spoke to were earnest. Some said their enthusiasm varied according to a partner’s enthusiasm; if a man fetishized swallowing, then she’d feel sexy when she swallowed. Others associated the spunk itself with male desire—making a man “come hard” or “come a ton” made her feel powerful, like a sex goddess. They saw orgasm as a loss of control, which means semen doesn’t mark “what he owns and how he owns it,” but her control over him and how she does that. Or, as one woman put it, “I like to see the fruits of my labor.” ■



137 MINUTES WITH ...

Hannibal Buress

The comedian has a TV series of his own, an unexpected new following, and firm opinions about orange juice.

BY JADA YUAN

HANNIBAL BURESS IS about to improvise the hell out of this trip to Trader Joe's. A man of risks, he's rolling without a grocery list and letting a reporter he's never met tag along, which definitely was not on the agenda. But work ran long prepping for his new Comedy Central show, *Why? With Hannibal Buress*, which, when we meet, is two days away from its inaugural, Tuesday-night taping, to be followed

by a 24-hour turnaround before airing on Wednesday—a no-safety-net format to allow for the freshest, most topical sketches and jokes. This is (according to Buress) his fourth, and only successful, attempt to get a series of his own on the air. Production is going to be frantic enough that if he doesn't stock his fridge now, he might never eat again. "Is that rude?" he asks, springing the new multitasking, errand-running plan on me only when I arrive at the swank West Holly-

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wood hotel where he's been living for the past two months. He's already ordered an Uber.

If you learn one thing from watching Buress's stand-up, it's that he operates under his own rhythm. Upon hearing his sleepy Chicago drawl, "people always think I'm high," he says, though he rarely is; most weed gives him anxiety. "You talk slower, you're less likely to say something dumb," he tells me in the Trader Joe's parking lot, then takes it back: "I just made up a fake philosophy! Nah, it's just how I talk." He's also patient with his observational jokes, letting them unfold over many minutes with unexpected twists and turns that lead to a sneaky, often hilariously mundane punch line. Such as the story from his 2014 stand-up special *Live From Chicago* about trashing his hotel room during a threesome with two coked-up girls in Minneapolis and then later returning to find the whole place spotless: "[The hotel] cleaned all of the kitchen counter, except they left a small bump of cocaine. I said, 'That's extremely professional hotel housekeeping ... They love people. That's the kind of attention to detail that gets you a five-star Yelp review right there! I'll be back to that Residence Inn Marriott!'"

Buress doesn't walk down the store's aisles so much as prowl them, bent over his shopping cart, leaning on crossed arms. He makes two entire loops of the premises without choosing a single item, apart from the Super Green smoothie powder he'd grabbed right when he walked in. "I haven't been to this store," he says. "I still might have to go to Whole Foods to get what I want, if their butchery situation isn't right." He begins to riff. "Smoked apple-Chardonnay chicken sausage? I'm intrigued," he says, throwing a package in his cart. "What's unured bacon? I don't know. We'll find out!" He picks Cajun salmon; three dozen eggs at varying price points so he can see if there's any difference in taste; two cartons of orange juice from concentrate, plus one jug of freshly squeezed in case he can't stomach the cheap stuff; two jars of pickles. Definitely no olives: A promo for *Why?* features Buress's somewhat angry musings about why people act like olives taste good when they're horrible. I tell him I disagree. "It's subjective," he says, "because obviously olives are still in business."

A young black male employee carrying a huge crate of fruit turns around. "Can I please take a picture with you, bro?" he asks. "You gotta put that shit down first," Buress says, and poses. "I was talking about you ten minutes ago!" says the employee. "You're me and my best friends' favorite comic," particularly for a bit in which Buress describes his lifelong dream of kicking a pigeon and starting a pigeon-kicking Olympics.

Much of the wider public, though, know Buress as the comedian whose slow-burning career turned into an inferno last fall after a covert cell-phone video of jokes he'd made onstage about Bill Cosby went viral. It wasn't some sort of calculated move; Buress had been doing that bit for six months, pointing out the hypocrisy of Cosby, of all people, smugly telling black people to pull their pants up. "Yeah, but you rape women, Bill Cosby, so turn the crazy down a couple notches," Buress said. "I don't curse onstage! Yeah, well, you're a rapist, so ..." *Inside Edition* tracked down Buress's address and slipped a business card under his door; his routine appearances on "Howard Stern" and *Jimmy Kimmel* mentioning Cosby became national news; Chris Rock (a Buress fan) defended him to black talk-radio hosts who'd wondered if trying Dr. Huxtable in public was too far over the line. Buress maintained that he hadn't done anything other than point out easily Googleable information, and some observers rued the fact that it took a guy to do it. Nonetheless, he's become the David to Cosby's Goliath, the comic—black, no less—who spoke out against an icon. It's undeniable that the subsequent wave of attention helped enable the many new women who've come forward since then, and contributed to the subsequent cancellation of many of Cosby's stand-up dates, as well as projects he'd had with NBC and Netflix.

Buress, to his credit, hasn't actively tried to capitalize on any of this. Like any performer, he'd rather be known for his own work than as the Cosby-slayer, and Buress was doing just fine before, selling out large theaters on tour and gaining new fans as Ilana Glazer's sweet, older dentist lover, Lincoln Rice, on *Broad City*. The attention has definitely upped his national profile, and can only help the reception of *Why?*—a show that was green-lit just before the Cosby stuff happened and essentially asks Buress to bombard us with his version of funny, from sketches to "man-on-the-street shit" to

**"You talk slower,
you're less
likely to say
something dumb.
I just made up
a fake philosophy!"**

"me in a live studio introducing shit." But he also became paranoid for a while, thinking that all the women who wanted to meet him were Cosby's agents. (He turned that idea into a joke on the premiere of *Why?*) Then there's the death threat he received from a "male bodybuilder-slash-stripper" friend of a friend on Facebook. He knew it wasn't serious, but it was disturbing nonetheless.

"I'm just burned out on it; it was October," Buress says wearily when I bring up Cosby later. "That's it."

We walk back to Buress's hotel—Uber canceled on him—to put the fish in the fridge of his suite, which has a kitchen, a washer-dryer, and daily housekeeping, "which is clutch," he says. (I see enough laundry on the floor to know he wears boxer briefs.) Buress pours himself a glass of the from-concentrate juice and nearly spits it out. "So that's why it costs less," he says. "That sucks!"

Then it's back out, to his local sports bar (too loud for us), then to the sushi place next door, where Buress tells me about his childhood on Chicago's West Side and the future he envisions, one in which he can sell out 20,000-seat arenas in at least a few key markets. Buress sees stand-up as the reason he's on TV, and TV as a way to get more people to watch his stand-up. Even his movie roles, most notably playing an angry bird in the forthcoming *Angry Birds* and a handyman in *Daddy's Home*, with the reteamed Will Ferrell and Mark Wahlberg, are meant to support his touring. "Having mostly funny scenes in a Will Ferrell–Mark Wahlberg movie helps me become a bigger stand-up, versus if I was, like, a serious character in something," he says. The way he sees it, if he bombs out of TV and movies, he can always get work as a stand-up and "probably make, like, \$30,000 to \$40,000 a week on the road."

On the walk back to the hotel, he tells me that a college buddy, the rapper Open Mike Eagle, is coming over later to help him rewrite lyrics to a song for the show, because they need to be more cutting. He has two more months in L.A. doing *Why?* and working on Adult Swim's *The Eric André Show* before heading to New York to shoot season three of *Broad City* and prepare a new stand-up special for Netflix. He's also working on his merchandising, because he thinks he could be pulling in \$10,000 a month more with better-designed T-shirts, lighters, and phone cases.

What's the use of accruing more money when he already surpasses most people's yearly salaries in a week, besides never again having to drink orange juice from concentrate? "There's a lot of different levels within the one percent," he says, laughing. "I want to move up within the one percent." ■

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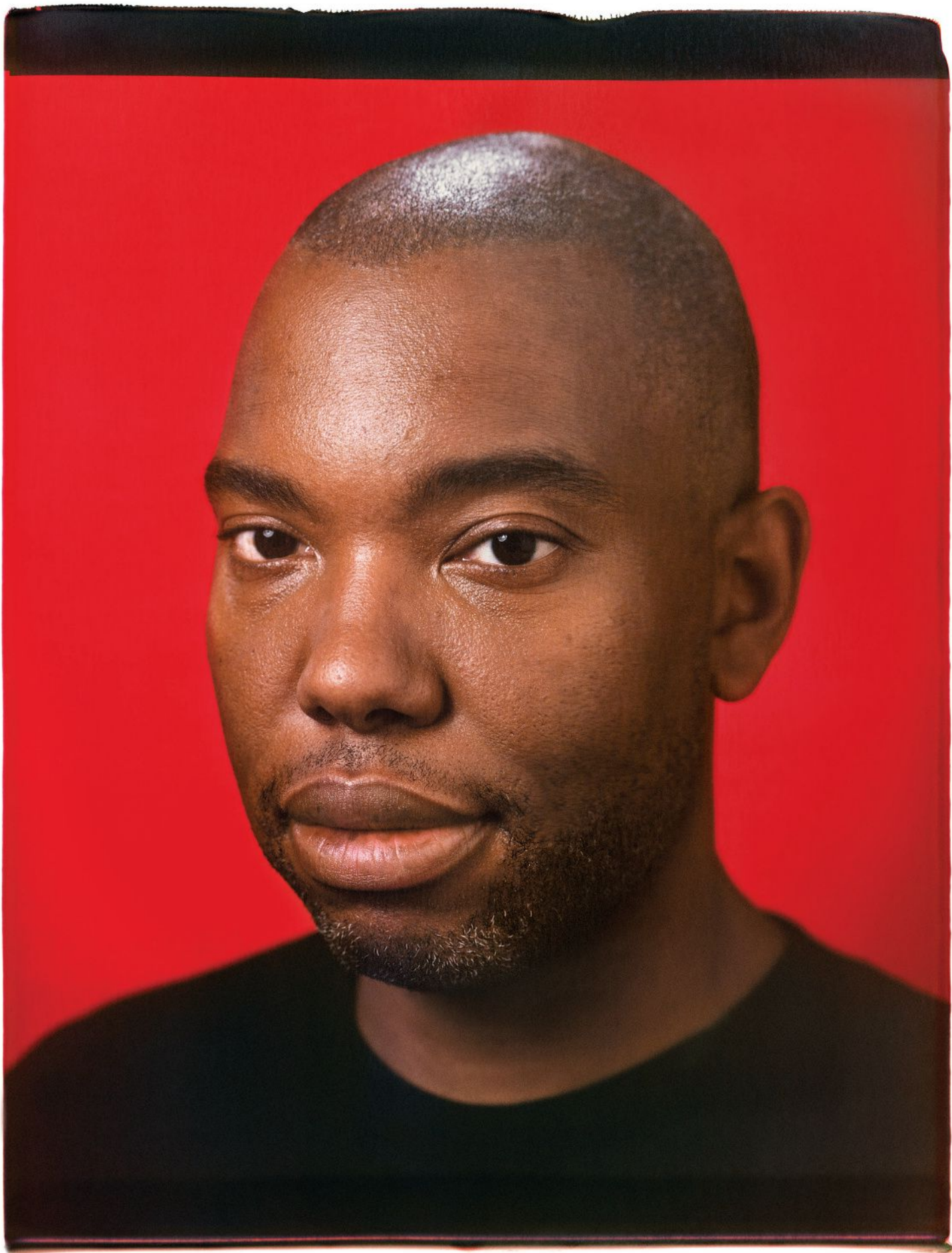
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After the dreams of Martin Luther King Jr.
and the hopes of Barack Obama,

The Hard Truths of Ta-Nehisi Coates

By
**BENJAMIN
WALLACE-
WELLS**



Roof had massacred nine black churchgoers in Charleston, and Coates, whose great theme is the intractability of racial history, had helped to orient the debate, to concentrate attention on the campaign against the Confederate flag: Even casual tweets he sent out were retweeted hundreds of times. The television behind the bar was tuned to President Obama's eulogy for the Reverend Clementa Pinckney, which was just about to start. The broadcast was muted, but Coates noticed the tableau: "There's a sister over here to the left, she's natural, no perm, and a very black dude, and then an African-American president." Coates imagined how this would appear to a 4-year-old white boy: "That's the world as he knows it," Coates said. "So all these people saying that symbols don't mean anything—that's bullshit. They mean a lot." Coates has often been a critic of the president from the left—of his instinct to submerge race in talk of class, of his moralizing to black audiences. "I'm going to make a prediction," he said. "He's going to say something incredible."

When Obama began his first campaign for the presidency, Coates was all but anonymous, a journalist in his early 30s who had worked mostly at alt-weeklies and mostly for short stints. But in 2008, he was hired by *The Atlantic*—to write longer pieces, then to blog—and eventually his commentary formed a counterpoint to the White House line. Against the optimism of the Obama ascendancy, Coates offered a bleaker view: that no postracial era was imminent, that white supremacy has been a condition of the United States since its inception and that it might always be. "White America" is a syndicate arrayed to protect its exclusive power to dominate and control our bodies," Coates writes to his son. While the president talked about the velocity of our escape from history, Coates insisted that the country was still stuck in its vise. Last year, he wrote an *Atlantic* cover story titled "The Case for

Reparations," probably the most discussed magazine piece of the Obama era, which detailed the persistence of structural racism—racism by government policy—into the present day. When Michael Brown was killed by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, and then Tamir Rice in Cleveland and Walter Scott in South Carolina, it was Coates who seemed to most adeptly digest the central paradox of the time: how, within an increasingly progressive era, a country led by a black president could still act with such racial brutality. In late December, when *Funny or Die* published a fake text-message chain between the president and his daughters, it had its fictional, radicalized Malia Obama coolly insisting, "I wish Ta-Nehisi Coates was my dad."

The sudden shift after the massacre, in which southern politicians turned against the Confederate flag, filled Coates with both awe and perplexity. "I mean, I tweeted this out, but I didn't expect it to happen: 'You talk about how this makes you feel. Then take down the damn flag,'" Coates said. "And hell, they did it! It turns out that was actually what was in motion." He shook his head. "Shit!"

That Sunday, the *Times* would give Coates a small role in focusing attention on the flag. More essential, the paper reported, were the public gestures of forgiveness that family members of the victims

LATE THIS SPRING, THE publisher Spiegel & Grau sent out advance copies of a new book by Ta-Nehisi Coates, a slim volume of 176 pages called *Between the World and Me*. "Here is what I would like for you to know," Coates writes in the book, addressed to his 14-year-old son. "In America, it is traditional to destroy the black body—it is heritage." ¶ The only endorsement he had wanted was the novelist Toni Morrison's. Neither he nor his editor, Christopher Jackson, knew Morrison, but they managed to get the galley into her hands. Weeks later, Morrison's assistant sent Jackson an email with her reaction: "I've been wondering who might fill the intellectual void that plagued me after James Baldwin died," Morrison had written. "Clearly it is Ta-Nehisi Coates." Baldwin died 28 years ago. Jackson forwarded the note to Coates, who sent back a one-word email: "Man."

Morrison's words were an anointing. They were also a weight. On the subject of black America, Baldwin had once been a compass—"Jimmy's spirit," the poet Amiri Baraka had said, eulogizing him, "is the only truth which keeps us sane." On the last Friday in June, the day after Morrison's endorsement was made public and then washed over Twitter, Coates sat down with me at a Morningside Heights bar and after some consideration ordered an IPA. At six-foot-four, he towers over nearly everyone he meets, and to close the physical distance he tends to turtle his neck down, making himself smaller: "A public persona but not a public person," explained his father, Paul Coates. Ta-Nehisi said he thought Morrison's praise was essentially literary, about the echo of Baldwin's direct and exhortative prose in his own. The week before, *The New Yorker's* David Remnick had called the forthcoming book "extraordinary," and A. O. Scott of the *New York Times* would soon go further, calling it "essential, like water or air." The figure of the lonely radical writer is a common one. A writer who radicalizes the Establishment is more rare. "When people who are not black are interested in what I do, frankly, I'm always surprised," Coates said. "I don't know if it's my low expectations for white people or what."

It had been nine days since the young white supremacist Dylan

had offered to Roof. “I will never talk to her ever again. I will never be able to hold her again, but I forgive you,” the daughter of a slain 70-year-old woman told her mother’s murderer at his hearing. These gestures had moved conservative Christians in a very religious state. Coates believes in the power of social structures, not in the politics of emotion. The consensus account—in which Strom Thurmond’s son, State Senator Paul Thurmond looked into the eyes of black fellow citizens at a church service after the massacre and decided that he could no longer defend the flag—reeked of myth. Even the public forgiving, so soon after the slaughter, seemed unreal. “Is that real?” Coates said, watching the service. “I question the realness of that.”

Coates is not a Christian. The heavy force in *Between the World and Me*—what makes it both unique and bleak—is his atheism. It gives Coates’s writing urgency. To consider the African-American experience without the language of souls and destiny is to strip it of euphemism, and to make the security of African-American bodies even more crucial. It also isolates him from the main black political tradition. “There’s a kind of optimism specifically within Christianity about the world—about whose side God is on,” he said. “Well, I didn’t have any of that in my background. I had physicality and chaos.”

Coates was still wondering about the Charleston family members, Christians forgiving. He splayed his fingers over his brow and covered his eyes, so that as he talked he could not see. “Is it aspirational?” he wondered. “Like, I say, ‘I forgive you’ because I think I’m supposed to?”

On the mute television, something was happening. The ministers were standing up and smiling. To their left, the first African-American president of the United States had lifted his head. He was singing “Amazing Grace.”

THE FIRST TIME Coates met the president, at an off-the-record White House conversation with liberal opinion writers in 2013, he left disappointed in himself. “Everyone was too deferential, and I was too deferential, too,” he said. The second time, a few months later, he was determined to do better. Coates had been reading Baldwin’s 1963 book, *The Fire Next Time*, and as he left his home in Harlem for the train station, his wife, Kenyatta Matthews, said to him, “What would Baldwin do?” On the train to D.C., Coates thought about the off-the-record 1963 meeting that Baldwin had brokered between Robert Kennedy and leading black activists, at which Kennedy felt the full force of black anger. (“They seemed possessed,” Kennedy would later say.) Coates arrived at the White House late and, because he had not prepared for rain, wet. He was not wearing a suit but a blazer and jeans. The president was going around the room answering questions on a wide range of topics, handling each expertly, in Coates’s view.

“And the race aspect is not gone from this,” Coates said. “To see a black dude in a room of the smartest white people and just be the smartest dude in the room—it just puts into context all the stuff about ‘Let me see his grades.’”

Occupying Coates’s mind were the racial dimensions of universal health care. It had become apparent, as reporters dug through Census data, that as Republican governors opted out of the federal government’s expansion of Medicaid, blacks and Hispanics would be disproportionately left out because of where they lived. Coates wanted the president to take more targeted action to counter this—to make the policy acknowledge race and not just class. Obama said that progressives were doing the best they could. At a certain moment, Coates became self-conscious. “This dispute happens, and all the other journal-

“When people who are not black are interested in what I do, frankly, I’m always surprised. I don’t know if it’s my low expectations for white people or what.”

ists are saying, ‘Oh my God, the two black dudes are fighting.’”

As the meeting ended, Obama pulled Coates aside. On his blog, the writer had criticized the president for suggesting, during a speech on the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington, that many African-Americans had “lost our way” and calling for more personal responsibility. The president told Coates he had been unfair. As he was walking away, Obama turned back and said, “Don’t despair.”

Coates took the long walk back to Union Station and found himself thinking about Baldwin. The warm optimism of the early civil-rights movement (the insistence that the universe has a moral arc, the sense of destiny in the lyrics to “We Shall Overcome”) echoed in Obama, but Baldwin had not shared “all of this sentiment and melodrama; he was just so cold,” said Coates. “Baldwin was saying, ‘You should be aware that failure is a distinct possibility: That was so freeing.’” Coates called Christopher Jackson and asked him why no one wrote like Baldwin anymore, and the editor suggested that he try. The book Coates eventually wrote wasn’t exactly that, though it borrowed its form from *The Fire Next Time*, part of which is addressed to his nephew. But it argued that what the president had called despair was actually the product of experience.

Coates was born in 1975 and grew up in Northwest Baltimore, in a sprawling family infused with black political consciousness. Paul Coates, who had briefly been a Black Panther and became a radical librarian and independent publisher, had seven children with four different women. Ta-Nehisi’s mother, Cheryl, a schoolteacher, was the last. Northwest Baltimore was sharply segregated—it basically still is—and so though Coates did not grow up poor, he did grow up in proximity to violence. “To be black in the Baltimore of my youth was to be naked before the elements of the world,” Coates writes in *Between the World and Me*. “The nakedness is not an error, nor the import of deviant culture. The nakedness is the correct and intended result of policy.” Coates’s first book, *The Beautiful Struggle*, published in 2008, was a memoir of growing up in this environment as a spacey, conscious kid, head deep in comic books, Malcolm X’s “The Ballot or the Bullet” speech on his Walkman. The book did not register widely, but the crime novelist Walter Mosley called Coates “the young James Joyce of the hip-hop generation.”

In one way, at least, Coates earned that praise: He could express very deeply the dimensions of fear. He writes of the kids gathered around Mondawmin Mall, across the street from his house, in puffy ’80s Starter jackets: “I think back on those boys now and all I see is fear, and all I see is them girding themselves against the ghosts of

the bad old days when the Mississippi mob gathered 'round their grandfathers." In this environment, the Black History Month invocations of Martin Luther King Jr. and the early civil-rights leaders seemed especially discordant: Nonviolence seemed like an impossible standard. Violence was a product of fear; it was also a tool against it. "My father was so very afraid. I felt it in the sting of his black leather belt, which he applied with more anxiety than anger, my father who beat me as if someone might steal me away, because that was exactly what was happening all around us."

Coates arrived at Howard University in 1993, when he was 17 years old, as Afrocentrism was just beginning to lose strength as an intellectual force, a shift that complicated Coates's own nationalism, in particular his veneration for Malcolm X. Coates was writing poetry then, and the effort pushed him into a circle of older black writers. They often told him how much more he had to learn. One mentor, the poet Joel Dias-Porter, quit his job and moved into a homeless shelter for two years so that he could spend each day at the Library of Congress, working through an impossibly long list of books he felt compelled to read. Coates developed a similar ritual—sitting down each morning at the Howard University library and requesting three books at a time, battling with the histories of nationalism and integration in his mind.

The happiest sections of Coates's new book are set at Howard: It is where he met his wife and where he found a "base, even in these modern times, a port in the storm." In the book he calls Howard "Mecca." Eventually he dropped out to work as a journalist, first at the Washington *City Paper* and then at some other alt-weeklies, where he usually was assigned to the race beat, to write about black experience, and though this was in some ways diminishing it also gave him an angle on the world. When Coates was 24, he and Matthews had a son, Samori—whom they named after a West African military leader who routed the French colonists—and moved to Brooklyn. Coates's personality, built for West Baltimore, was at times an ungainly fit in his new world: He writes of feeling himself swelling toward physical fights, of being conscious of his race, of not feeling comfortable. They did not have much money. For a while, Coates mainly stayed home with Samori. An essay of his from the period is titled "Confessions of a Black Mr. Mom."

The fear that gives life to *Between the World and Me* is the fear of a parent for his child. Though the book went through many revisions, Coates said he was always sure that he would end it by describing his meeting with a woman named Mabel Jones, whose son, Prince, had been a friend of his at Howard and who was later killed by a police officer who tracked him from Maryland to Virginia in a case of mistaken identity—he had committed no crime. Mabel Jones was a sharecropper's daughter who worked to become a radiologist, then sent her children to private schools and made sure to give them things like "jaunts off to Europe." For Coates, Mabel Jones became

not just an emblem of dignity, of "all of the odd poise and direction that the great American injury demands of you," but also a signal of the impossibility of escaping the tragedies of race, even for well-off blacks. Her son was killed, and the police officer who shot him, a black man himself, was allowed to return to the force. Jones's death so alienated Coates that when he watched 9/11, slightly stoned, on the roof of his Brooklyn building, he recalls that he felt nothing at all. "You must always remember," Coates writes to Samori, "that the sociology, the history, the economics, the graphs, the charts, the regressions all land, with great violence, upon the body."

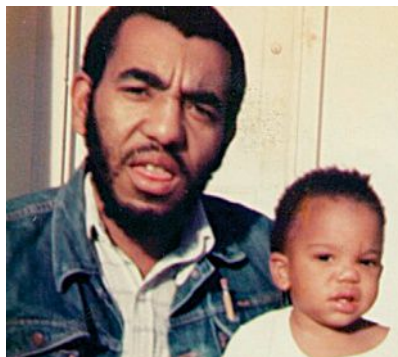
Coates has borrowed this language from feminist writing. For him, it contained a basic truth, that indignity is always physical. The vulnerability of African-American bodies has become a main theme of the racial protests over the past year under slogans like "I Can't Breathe." "Sell cigarettes without the proper authority and your body can be destroyed," Coates writes. "Turn into a dark stairwell and your body can be destroyed. The destroyers will rarely be held accountable. Mostly they will receive pensions."

Coates's first piece for *The Atlantic* was an essay criticizing Bill Cosby, who was then still an icon, for tearing into black audiences about values and responsibility. Soon, the magazine gave him his own blog. The form (intimate, open-ended, inquiring) suited him, and eventually he took up the personal project that had lapsed once he'd left Howard, a study of history. Reading new books, trading notes with his commenters, Coates sharpened his sense of the historical weight of white supremacy: The Civil War was fought over slavery and nothing else; the American Dream could not be separated from slavery because "slavery was the dream." At the time, most young journalists were leaning on social science for authority—history had a human warmth. Coates noticed the good people on the wrong side of history, suggesting that individual virtue was a weak counterweight to the pathologies of states. Had he been alive and had means, he tweeted, "I would have owned slaves too."

A community grew in his comments section, but it was a community of a particular type: liberal, wide-eyed, pining for

moral authority—and redemption. "Coates's creepshow commenters asking him to forgive their sins," the left-wing critic Fredrik deBoer sardonically described it. Last week on Twitter, a woman asked Coates about the pronunciation of his first name: "I'm really curious what the etymology is that makes the 'hi' a 'hah' sound?" Coates replied, "It's an ancient, arcane dialect which we like to call 'hood.'" One irony of Coates's war on white innocence is that he has arrayed against it an army of white innocents.

In the fall of 2012, Coates told his editor at *The Atlantic*, Scott Stossel, that he wanted to make a case for racial reparations in the



TOP: Coates with his father on their Park Heights stoop.

MIDDLE: With his son, Samori, in the summer of 2001.

BOTTOM: With his son in 2013.

Coates said he would not have written 'Between the World and Me' in 2008. "I have become radicalized."

magazine. The case was formless then, but over the following months it took shape as an account of the experience of housing discrimination in Chicago and the way government policy deliberately fenced blacks into particular neighborhoods and denied them the benefits that went to whites nearby.

Coates's hero was a 91-year-old man named Clyde Ross, who had left the segregated Mississippi Delta, where his family had been unable to keep white people from simply taking their possessions, and come north, only to be trapped by redlining and predatory banking into a home loan that he had no hope of repaying. Ross became an activist, but in Coates's alchemy, he became a symbol of the presence of history, a physical reminder that these crimes did not happen so long ago. The great theme of the piece is plunder (the word appears 14 times)—of what was taken from African-Americans specifically because they were black and not because they were poor, and specifically because of government policy, and recently. Reparations were morally necessary, Coates argued, because the harm was so tangible. He wrote, "Plunder in the past made plunder in the present efficient." The essay had a moral consequence too, to refocus the idea of reparations. Coates's reparations weren't about the country cleansing itself of original sin. They were restitution to be paid for property that continues to be taken.

That article appeared two months before Michael Brown was killed in Ferguson. Coates's view of the world was growing starker. "It's only in the last 18 months that he's said he's a non-believer," said Jelani Cobb, a close friend of Coates's since Howard and a historian at the University of Connecticut. If you did not believe in the soul, then police killings took on especially high stakes because the body was all you had. Coates said he would not have written *Between the World and Me* in 2008. His view was less bleak then, less concretized by history. "I have become radicalized," he said.

Coates's quarrel isn't really with Obama, in the end, or with civil-rights leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. It is instead with the metaphors through which they made a compromise with the country—Obama as the embodiment of hope and King the embodiment of dreams. These formulations gave white liberals a pass. Coates plays with both these words in his book, reconsidering them, twisting them around. In the very first scene, he disdains white Americans' "reveling in a specious hope"; later, he urges his son to accept "the preferences of the universe itself," among them the preference for "struggle over hope." The Dream became a controlling metaphor for white innocence. "That what your ancestors did doesn't matter," Coates explained. "That you went out to the suburbs, and the houses grew from nothing and it's not contaminated by anything. The idea that you're entitled to it, and people who don't have it are either pathological or lower than you. That nothing's wrong."

Part of what distinguishes Coates is that he is not interested in uplift. Obama's insight into his own biography was that it revealed American progress. Coates saw far more stasis running in the background of his own life. When he spoke in Charleston, Obama took his metaphor from "Amazing Grace." Through God's grace, the president said, Americans could now see the legacy of brutality that the Confederate flag embodied clearly. Coates's writing takes an almost opposite position: that religion is blindness, and that if you strip away the talk of hope and dreams and faith and progress, what you see are enduring structures of white supremacy and no great reason to conclude that the future will be better than the past.

"That's the thing that linked Martin Luther King and Malcolm X," Coates said. "People say Malcolm was a pessimist. He was a pessimist about America. But he was actually very optimistic. Malcolm very much believed in the dream of nationalism. He believed we could do it. And Martin believed in the dream of integration. He believed that black people could be successful if they did x, y, and z." Coates did not share that optimism: African-Americans are a minority in America, and he sees limits to what they can control. "I suspect they were both wrong. I suspect that it's not up to us."

THE MONDAY AFTER the president's eulogy in Charleston, Coates flew to Colorado for the Aspen Ideas Festival. Private jets were scattered over the tarmac, each sleek and bony as a fish skeleton. Aspen is a junket to end all junkets. Tickets cost up to \$9,000; there are pop-up planetariums; at sponsor dinners, *Atlantic* writers sometimes stand up from their tables, forks clinking against glasses, and discourse for three minutes about, say, mass incarceration. The speakers are ideologically promiscuous. The collision of real intellectuals and real money is surreal.

The Atlantic invited Coates to the festival for the first time in 2008, when he was still a freelancer. He found it disorienting. At *The Atlantic's* Publisher's Dinner, he wound up talking with a very wealthy man who had made his money in department stores, who was telling a story about lending Peter Jennings his yacht. Coates liked him. "He was talking about how that morning he had gone out and taken his dog up into the mountains and seen a moose. And I was like, 'Damn, that's your life?' Not in a mad way, I just did not know that this was what people did."

Coates is more comfortable here now. That afternoon, he was wearing a red T-shirt that said **MAKE CORNBREAD NOT WAR**, which everyone complimented. He still notices the wealth, but it does not especially faze him; he has a theory about the ideological profile of the attendees (split between Republicans and Democrats, but with very few real conservatives); he knows which barbecue places are actually good and which restaurants will overcharge you. It was sunny and immaculate and the crowd was diverse in a way that made you, or at least me, think warmly about America. Soon Coates would walk toward a shuttle into Aspen for dinner, shortening his steps to keep behind the penguinlike form of Bill Kristol, also waiting for a ride. Coates gestured. "It would be very easy to come here and then complain about people making me have all these dinners and lunches with sponsors and how I'd much rather be out there standing with the people on 125th and Lenox," Coates said. "But truthfully I'm very happy to be here. It's very nice."

The next morning, Coates debated Mitch Landrieu, the Democratic mayor of New Orleans, on the sources of American violence. The exchange was moderated by Coates's friend and colleague Jeffrey Goldberg. The mayor—shaven-headed, coachlike—had made crime in black neighborhoods a political focus. It was an issue on which he was accustomed to being the good guy. The search engine Bing had sponsored an app that (Continued on page 94)

The fight over plastic bags is about a lot more than





Thank
you for
Not Using
Me!

how to get groceries home.

By **ADAM STERNBERGH**

Photographs by Bobby Doherty



AUREN KUBY

had a simple ambition: She wanted to get something done. Kuby works by day at a sustainability institute that's part of Arizona State University in Tempe, but last year she decided to run for City Council. President Obama had called for state and local action in his State of the Union address in 2015, encouraging municipalities to act as laboratories for progressive change, and Kuby took his words to heart. After she was sworn in to her new council seat in January, she started looking for a project to take on. She quickly found one: plastic bags.

You are no doubt familiar with plastic bags—you probably own several dozen of them right now, likely folded in a drawer, or crammed under your sink, or stuffed inside other, larger plastic bags. (A singular feature of the plastic bag is that it's one of the few pieces of refuse that can, cannibalistically, contain itself.) Because if you are a typical New Yorker, you go through roughly 620 single-use plastic bags a year. If that figure sounds high, consider this: It's about two a day. Now think about the last 24 hours of your life. Did you get a plastic bag at the deli? At Fairway? Did a bag come wrapped around your Seamless order? All of the above? In a year, New York City as a whole manages to go through 5.2 billion single-use plastic bags. That's about 10,000 bags a minute—the vast majority of which end up as landfill.

Tempe's population is just 168,000, yet it goes through at least 50 million plastic bags a year. So Kuby started looking at other cities to see how they've dealt with bags. In 2000, when Mumbai discovered that plastic bags were clogging storm drains and exacerbating flooding during monsoon season, it banned them altogether. Plastic bags have also been banned in Bangladesh, Taiwan, Kenya, Rwanda, and Mexico City. By most accounts, these bans were accommodated and even embraced by locals.

Tempe, however, never had a chance to implement any bag legislation because, in April, the Arizona State Legislature passed SB 1241, a health-care bill with a curious amendment that declared that no city or town may “impose a tax, fee, assessment, charge or return deposit ... for auxiliary containers.” In an unexpected, Dr. Seussian twist, Arizona had preemptively banned the ban: *You ban bags? We'll ban bag bans!* Arizona is not the first state to enact a ban ban; Florida did so in 2008, and Missouri and Texas are investigating similar legislation.

Proponents of preemptively banning the bag ban argue that local bans create a confusing hodgepodge of regulation and that environmental fears over plastic bags are overblown. Others see the skirmish as part of a larger war: The unending fight to combat government tyranny and protect the American Way. Some commentators have even connected efforts to regulate plastic bags to a conspiracy involving Agenda 21, a U.N. sustainability initiative that's become a focus of fears about the advent of one-world control. Of a bag ban enacted (and subsequently repealed) in Dallas, Glenn Beck, noted Agenda 21-ologist and famously sensitive barometer of societal cataclysm, warned his radio listeners: “You have got to stand up for little things like the plastic-bag thing ... If I want to use a plastic bag, I will use a plastic bag ... Fascists ban things. What are we doing?”

What Kuby hadn't realized is that in attempting to address the tens of thousands that Tempe spends annually disposing of discarded plastic bags, she'd stumbled into a larger fight. It's a battle being waged across the country—and one that's about to open its newest front in New York: Mayor Bill de Blasio, who'd promised a bag ban in his campaign platform, is currently considering how, and whether, to tackle the issue. The battle is not just being fought over the fate of a familiar modern convenience but over, for one side, our last vestiges of freedom and, for the other, the future of planet Earth. And fluttering above this battlefield like the tattered banner of a besieged army, amid a haze of misinformation, counterarguments, and money, money, money, you'll find a single, flimsy, humble plastic bag.

PLASTIC BAGS ARE AMAZING. You can carry your groceries in them. You can use one to line your bathroom trash can. You can put one on your head as an impromptu rain bonnet. You can quickly and cleanly pick up dog shit. You can even thank a plastic bag in your Oscar speech, as Alan Ball once did, when he concluded the thank-yous for his Best Screenplay award for *American Beauty*: “And finally, that plastic bag in front of the World Trade Center so



many years ago, for being whatever it is that inspires us to do what we do.” *American Beauty*, of course, contains perhaps the single most famous appearance of a plastic bag in the entire cultural corpus: a scene in which a disaffected character watches a video of a plastic bag dancing in the wind and declares, “Sometimes there's so much beauty in the world.”

The single-use plastic grocery bag, which was born about 50 years ago, is the answer to a question no one was asking and the solution to a problem that didn't exist. Back in the 1960s, not many people were wondering, *How can I possibly carry my stuff around?*, since people had been carrying their stuff around uneventfully for millennia—in cloth bags, burlap sacks, leather



Plastic bags
at Sims
Municipal
Recycling in
Sunset Park.

pouches, and, once upon a time, dried-out bull scrota. What some people *were* asking—petrochemical companies, most notably, since plastic is manufactured from by-products of petroleum and natural gas—was: “What *else* in the world can be made out of plastic?”

In 1962, a Swedish inventor, Sten Thulin, filed a patent for a thin, plastic bag, folded and made in such a way as to provide improbable strength and durability. Consumers were initially resistant to replacing their familiar paper bags, but by the early 1980s, national grocery chains were subbing paper for plastic, largely because plastic was

cheaper: These days, the cost is one to two cents per bag, as opposed to six to eight cents for paper bags. The ascent of the plastic grocery bag, ironically, was applauded by many environmentalists, given that plastic didn’t require the consumption of trees.

But the heyday of plastics as a perceived modern miracle was surprisingly brief. In 1955, *Life* magazine published a story titled “Throwaway Living,” announcing that, thanks to the convenience of disposable plastic items, the average American had been freed from domestic drudgery. The accompanying photo showed a Cleaveresque family tossing disposable items in the air like confetti: “The objects flying through the air in this picture would take 40 hours to clean—except no housewife

need bother.” By 1967, however, Benjamin Braddock’s neighbor in *The Graduate* was passing on his famously chilling career advice: “Plastics!” Once the plastic grocery bag arrived in stores about ten years later, it seemed less like a miracle than like just another plastic thing to be absorbed into our increasingly plasticized lives. Homeless women became “bag ladies”; plastic bags picked up the derogatory nickname “Italian suitcase.” In her hit “Firework,” Katy Perry sings: “Do you ever feel / Like a plastic bag / Drifting through the wind / Wanting to start again?” Plastic bags have become symbols of the quotidian, the boring, the grindingly mundane.

They’ve also become a problem. They’re a problem for city sanitation departments,

Of all the perils facing the planet, plastic bags seem like an easy one to fix. But we can't even do that.

because they're so light and aerodynamic, which makes them a particularly pernicious litter nuisance when they're blown out of trash receptacles into trees, gutters, fences, and parks. Environmentalists dislike them because they often end up on beaches and coastal waters, endangering marine life. They've also become a target for anyone who's generally concerned that we've reached a point in human history when manufacturing a brand-new item that's intended to be used for, on average, 12 minutes, then discarded to linger more or less forever in a landfill, seems like a totally routine thing to do. If nothing else, the raw numbers are staggering. The world goes through more than a trillion bags a year. All this prompted a U.N. undersecretary-general to declare that bags "should be banned or phased out rapidly everywhere" because "there is simply zero justification for manufacturing them anymore, anywhere."

But it's not like plastic bags are that much worse than other plastic products. In a sense, plastic bags have become a victim of their own mundanity. Cars are an environmental problem, too, but few people are suggesting an outright ban on cars, because people love their cars and a world without cars is hard to imagine. Not so for plastic bags: Everyone uses them but nobody loves them, and they're easily replaced with other kinds of bags. Which is precisely why they've become such a fitting symbol of a striking modern dilemma: They're a ubiquitous convenience that's not essential, that no one's truly enamored of, yet one from which we can't seem to extricate ourselves. Of all the perils facing the planet, plastic bags seem like an easy one to fix. But we can't even do that.

I'M NOT REALLY involved in that many things," says Don Williams, who runs the website stopthebag-ban.com. But when his hometown of San Jose, California, passed a plastic-bag ban three years ago, "I thought, *This is crazy*. I mean, a bunch of us were pulling our hair out." So Williams started a mailing list for people who were interested in opposing the bag ban, which he says now boasts 175 to 200 people. On his site, Williams tackles and dismisses all the arguments in favor of banning, charging for, or otherwise regulating plastic bags. In part, he does this because he's a fan of the convenience. But

mostly it's because he's suspicious of what he calls "a greener-than-thou kind of thing," which, for him, is fueled by "the typical elitist attitude that looks down on the common people." In his experience, the common people want free plastic bags.

"You could hire ten to 20 workers for a fraction of the money they spend on advancing these bans," he says, "and their whole job every day could be to go pick up, like, five bags each." Problem solved. He also notes that plastic bags may be a litter concern, but there's all kinds of garbage in his local creek. "There's mattresses, there's tires—so are we banning mattresses? Are we banning tires? They found a dead body in the creek. I wanted to write to my councilmember to say, 'Hey, you need to pass a ban on dead bodies.'" For Williams, living in bag-free San Jose (where it turns out there is, in fact, an existing ban on the deliberate creation of dead bodies) must feel a bit like serving in the Resistance while living in Vichy France. I asked him what he uses to transport his own groceries, even as he fights the good fight online. He explained that he orders custom-made plastic bags by the boxful, each with ONE SAFE CLEAN CONVENIENT CONTRABAND PLASTIC BAG printed on one side and I CHOOSE PLASTIC printed on the other. "I take them to the grocery store. I hand them out to people in line. It's like contraband. They look around—they're like, 'Are we allowed to use these?'" As for his wife, she uses reusable bags.

Among all the organizations with various homespun names like Bag the Ban and the American Progressive Bag Alliance, Williams's is the rare one that isn't funded, in some way, by the plastics industry. Understandably, plastic-bag manufacturers have reacted swiftly to efforts to regulate bags—after all, even the cigarette, a product with no practical purpose that has been proved to *kill people* who use it, is not facing calls for an outright ban. So lobby groups like the American Chemistry Council have fought back with anti-bag-ban messaging of their own, as well as aggressively pursuing lawsuits, funding referendums, and sponsoring petitions to overturn local bans already in place.

Here are a few of their arguments. Plastic bags, they claim, are more ecologically friendly than paper—because paper bags weigh more, require more resources to create and transport, and take up more space in the landfill. (Paper bags don't, however,

pose the same litter risk, have a much shorter life span, and are recycled at a much higher rate.) Reusable bags, they say, are both unsafe and unpatriotic—because bacteria might collect in them and many reusable bags are manufactured in China. Also, they contend, a mandatory fee on plastic bags—such as a five-cent fee introduced in Washington, D.C., in 2010—is a tax grab that disproportionately affects the poor. (One paradox of the pro-bag position is having to argue that plastic bags are a valuable commodity that people nonetheless aren't willing to pay a few cents for.) Plastic bags, they argue, are 100 percent recyclable—at least in theory. However, most cities, including New York, don't accept film plastic (i.e., plastic bags) in their existing curbside recycling programs, and bag-return programs at stores are not very successful. Even by the industry's own optimistic estimate, just 15 percent of bags are returned for recycling. (Environmentalists typically put this figure at lower than 5 percent.) Which means at least 85 percent of a trillion bags are left to find their way in the world, over their subsequent 1,000-or-so-year life span.

For Mark Daniels, the chairman of the American Progressive Bag Alliance and a senior vice-president of sustainability at Novolex, one of the largest manufacturers of plastic bags in the world, the argument is even simpler. "The environmental-activist community has basically hijacked the debate and used this as their fund-raising tool," he says. So, for example, environmentalists might show you a sad photo of a turtle eating a shredded-up plastic bag (which it likely tried to eat because it mistook the floating bag for a jellyfish), but can they tell you exactly how many turtles actually die from eating plastic bags? And how many dead turtles should mean that you can't tote your groceries home in a free plastic bag? In addition, he'd like you to know that Novolex recently spent \$30 million on a new plant in Indiana specifically designed to recycle plastic bags. Novolex also sends out educational DVDs to places like Walmart, where there is now an initiative called "Think 6" that encourages baggers to place six, not four, items in each bag. "We're very much trying to create an equilibrium," Daniels says, "so that the amount of plastic bags is the correct amount." Now, if only there were a way to agree on what the "correct" amount of plastic bags might be.

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In a sense, plastic bags have become a victim of their own mundanity.

THE NADIR OF the plastic bag's reputation, at least in certain circles, may have occurred on Wednesday, July 18, 2007, at eight in the morning. That's when 15 Whole Foods in the New York area offered a \$15 reusable canvas tote, commissioned by an environmental activist group and designed by Anya Hindmarch, that read I AM NOT A PLASTIC BAG. The bag presented a canny opportunity for performative rectitude: a reusable bag that publicly announced its own virtue. Naturally, it was a huge hit.

Only 20,000 such bags were offered for sale in New York, so they were snapped up and soon appeared on eBay for prices up to \$300. People miffed by the bag's haughty sentiment began sporting competing bags, including one that read I AM NOT A SMUG TWAT. Soon, gleeful reports surfaced that the Hindmarch bags had been manufactured in China by low-cost labor and weren't organic. Hindmarch counterclaimed that the carbon cost of shipping the bags overseas had been offset by the purchase of carbon credits. In hindsight, *l'affaire* Hindmarch illustrates the confusing backlash that can greet any well-intentioned ecologically minded gesture. The conundrums—carbon credits! China!—can lead to a kind of ethical paralysis, which might well send you running back to your familiar plastic bags. Or running to stick your head inside a plastic bag.

A more significant death knell for the plastic bag, however, occurred earlier, in August 1997, when a seafarer named Charles Moore discovered what's come to be known as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. It's a collection of plastic in the Pacific Ocean that is, depending on whom you ask, the size of Texas, or two Texases, or the entire continental USA. The patch is notable because, on the one hand, it's hard not to be alarmed by the phrase "an island of plastic the size of Texas in the middle of the ocean." On the other hand, the Great Pacific Garbage Patch isn't actually like what most people envision. It's not an enormous floating mound of Tide bottles and toothbrushes. It's barely visible from a boat. That doesn't mean it's not a problem. Unlike paper, which biodegrades, plastic photodegrades, meaning it breaks down into ever-smaller pieces when exposed to UV rays in sunlight. So the so-called Garbage Patch is really more like a soup made up of millions of tiny flakes of plastic, floating just below the surface of the water, soaking up toxins, and looking to fish an awful lot like food.

Plastic bags, to be clear, are not a big part of the garbage patch—they're too insubstantial to wind up way out in the middle of the ocean. But the news of the patch was a turning point in how people think about plastics and the planet—it felt like a bill coming due. It's like the Garbage Patch of Dorian Gray: an ugly, previously hidden illustration, dragged down from the planet's ecological attic, of the true cost of our perfect plastic lives.

K

ATHRYN GARCIA, New York's commissioner of Sanitation, is talking about carrots and sticks. "We're doing a lot on the promotional side," she explains, sitting at the large board table in her office downtown. "We're working with City Hall and the mascot Birdie [the city's GreenNYC mascot], giving out Birdie's Bags. We're trying to use carrots—but occasionally, to get everyone to change, we need something more." Garcia is currently in the middle of a fight to bring some sort of plastic-bag action to New York. She is less professionally concerned with plastic bags in far-away oceans than she is with the 1,700 tons that New Yorkers throw away *each week*. New York pays an estimated \$10 million a year to transport single-use bags, both plastic and paper, to out-of-state landfills—and that doesn't cover the money spent to pick them up as loose litter. Recently, I visited Manhattan Beach, a sliver of sand off Sheephead Bay, early on the morning after Fourth of July weekend, and, sure enough, were I an alien, I'd have assumed the beach was some sort of plastic-bag farm, ready for harvest.

As a question of civic policy, the plastic-bag debate would seem to be a perfect one for contemporary New York, seeing as it resides precisely at the crossroads of bloodless Bloombergian autocratic problem-solving and de Blasio firebrand progressivism. Yet New York has continually lagged behind other cities and countries on the issue; for example, China, which is not exactly thought of as in the environmental vanguard, banned free plastic bags in 2008. That's the same year that Mayor Bloomberg floated the notion of a six-cent fee on grocery bags, but it went nowhere. Currently, several City Council members are pushing for a ten-cent fee on plastic

bags. But no legislation has been enacted. Bertha Lewis, a consultant to Mayor de Blasio and the head of the Black Leadership Action Coalition, wrote an editorial for the *Gotham Gazette* arguing that the bag fee "is counterintuitive, and hurts the working class and small-business owners that make our city strong." Lewis was later asked by Capital New York to account for the fact that her foundation has received payments from the American Progressive Bag Alliance—that's Mark Daniels's group—and she responded, "That's insulting. I think it is absolutely just the most egregious character assassination ever." Elsewhere, the argument has fallen along predictable sectarian lines: "Ten Cents a Bag? That's About Right," opined the *Times*. "Trash This Tax," bleated the *Post*.

The plastic-bag debate as a whole, though, highlights how New York exists as a kind of paradox: a self-consciously progressive city (certainly by national standards) that nonetheless, through political inertia or a weirdly proud embrace of civic dysfunction, has a difficult time supporting progressive policies. We, the populace, have proved both forward-looking and stubbornly resistant to change. Thanks to the once-divisive smoking ban, we've managed to live happily without our romantically smoke-clogged restaurants and bars for more than a decade. Yet a new bike lane can spark a fistfight. This is the city, after all, in which countless bureaucrats toiled tirelessly to rid the subways of graffiti, yet now we sit around and recall it wistfully. New York can seem at times like a vibrant laboratory for social progress, at others like a giant sclerotic machine that's barely able to function, let alone improve. And the most insignificant detritus of daily life can take on hallowed status: Reusable versions of both the iconic deli Greek coffee cup and, yes, the I ♥ NY plastic bag are enshrined at the MoMA gift shop. The plastic bag, the throwaway coffee cup—not to mention overflowing garbage cans, sky-high rents, crammed subways, grinding commutes, subway rats, sidewalk roaches, and noxious smells—are all familiar by-products, even totems, of our romanticized go-go New York lifestyle. We don't solve these problems; we survive them. We're 8 million harried people crammed together. We can barely make it through the week, let alone be expected to save the world. (Continued on page 95)

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“
Do
You
Know
How
Your
Daughter
Died?
”

By **ROBERT KOLKER**

When Gloria Huang was declared dead in a Qatar emergency room, her parents had no time to grieve before they were caught up in a legal nightmare.

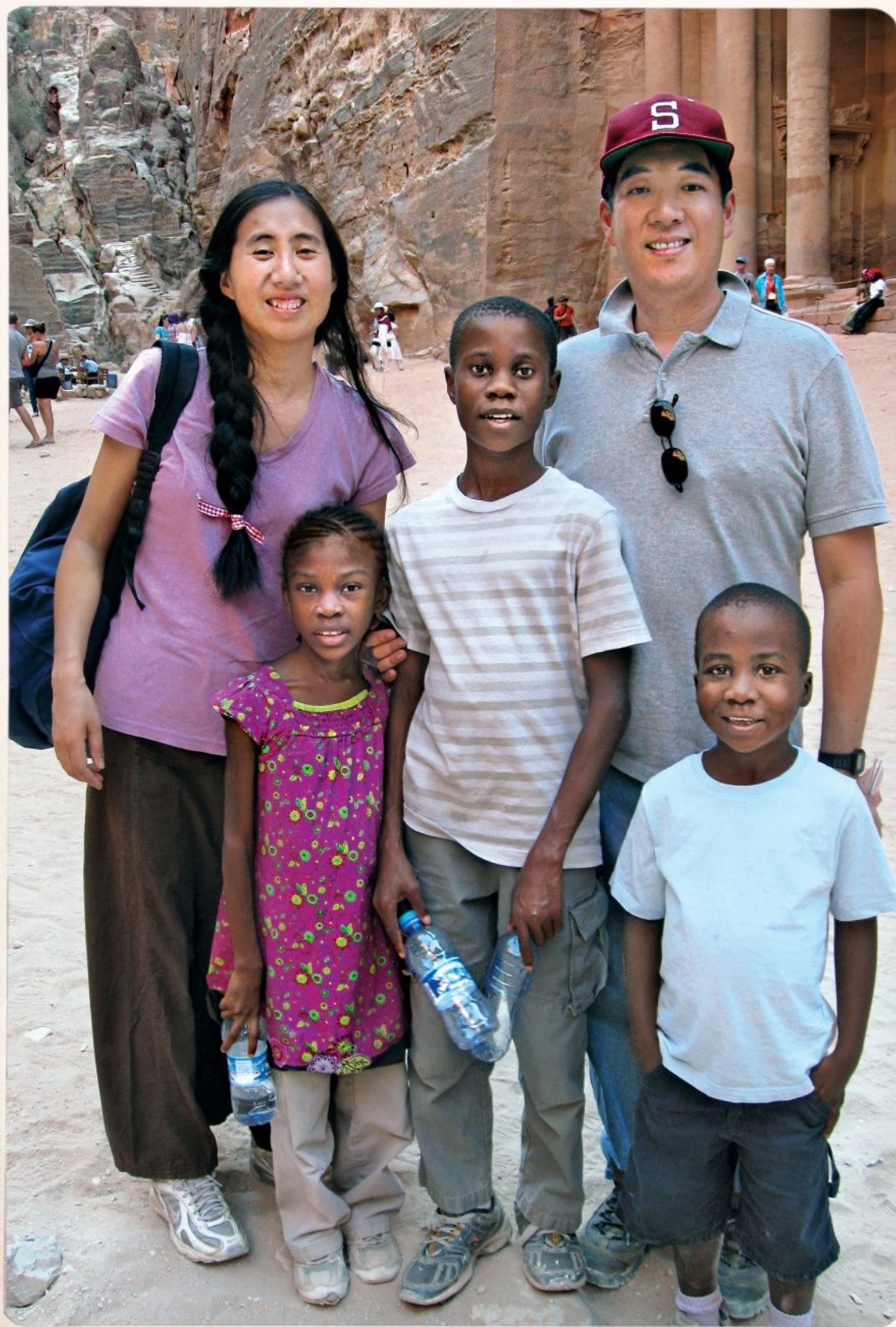
GLORIA LOVED SINGING AND DANCING. She loved being read to—*Mrs. Tiggy Winkle* and *Two Bad Mice*, by Beatrix Potter, were favorites. She loved puzzles, princesses, climbing trees, and riding on her bicycle with her helmet off. She loved watching *The Nutcracker* over and over while her mother did her hair. Her brothers would get a little jealous of that one-on-one time. Gloria loved that, too.

There were also problems that were hard for an 8-year-old to articulate. When Gloria acted out, it was usually with food. She'd refuse to eat for days, then brag to her brothers about how long she could go. She'd sneak into the kitchen at night and gorge



herself—a full loaf of bread, a whole box of cereal, a package of cookies. Sometimes she'd eat leftovers from the garbage—or tissues. In one frightening episode, it was aspirin and Pepto-Bismol. Her parents began to lock her bedroom door at night.

Gloria was adopted, and though adopting troubled children was something that Matt and Grace Huang had sought out together—a mission in line with their Christian faith—they were floored by some of the challenges. Matt and Grace had known each other



The Huangs on vacation in Jordan in October 2012, a few months before Gloria's death.

since they were teenagers in the same church choir in Los Angeles. His parents were from Japan and the Philippines; her family had come from Taiwan when she was 7. They both attended the University of California–Irvine. When they started dating, after college, Grace was studying to be an elementary-school teacher; Matt was working for the engineering company MWH Global, setting up water-infrastructure projects in L.A. They got married and talked about starting a family. When they learned they could not have children of their own, they decided to find others to take care of, just as they trusted that God would always take care of them.

They settled on Ghana, where they could adopt older children, ones who might be overlooked by other prospective parents. Gloria was 4 when they first learned about her in 2008; her brother Ezra* was 6. They were living together in an orphanage. “They just kind of kept coming back to us,” Grace says. “We would think about them. We were praying for them, that they would find parents. But, yeah, it ended up being us.” Grace spent two months at the orphanage, getting to know them and easing the transition. She decided to quit her job as a teacher to homeschool them.

When she arrived in L.A. in May 2009, Gloria weighed 38 pounds—just below average. Her checkup revealed giardia, a parasitic infection. She took antibiotics, and by July 2010, she was 43 pounds. Then there was a backslide: In November 2011, she was 40.8 pounds, significantly underweight for her age. Grace and Matt understood what she was going through, to a point. They’d learned that because of their early deprivation, children like Gloria can feel constantly empty, both physically and emotionally, cycling in and out of trusting their caregivers.

There was a diagnosis for this—reactive attachment disorder, or RAD—and the Huangs followed the protocol, creating what Grace called a “high structure, high nurture” environment. Mealtimes were still the same: They sat together at the table as a family, whether Gloria ate or not. They made sure she stayed hydrated, and her doctor assured them she was healthy despite her low weight and encouraged them to be patient and non-confrontational. RAD is considered an emotional disorder more than a medical one, and pushing food on their daughter seemed only to spur more tantrums.

**The names of Gloria's siblings were changed at the request of the Huangs.*

In 2012, MWH Global named Matt part of a team designing a water-purification project to ready the city of Doha, Qatar, for the 2022 World Cup. He had always traveled a lot for work, but this job would be a two-year assignment, at least. Matt and Grace decided they should go as a family. Before the move, their pediatrician gave a clean bill of health to Gloria, her big brother, and a new little brother—Jesse, adopted from Uganda a year earlier. They arrived in Qatar in the middle of Ramadan, when Doha seemed all but closed. They rented a duplex in a gated compound with a pool, made friends with non-Qatari employees of ExxonMobil and other big companies, and joined a church. Life took on a certain rhythm, not unlike the one they’d known at home.

Then came Christmas. Gloria was withdrawn, and as usual she wasn’t saying why. They celebrated Ezra’s birthday in early January. Soon after, the family was at lunch at another expat home when Gloria gorged herself on cake and biscuits. Afterward, she said she felt sick and refused to eat. Matt and Grace faced a quandary. They had yet to find an English-speaking pediatrician, and so they decided that, rather than take Gloria to a Qatari doctor whom none of them knew and risk sending her further into her food boycott, they’d try to ride it out. Looking back now, they can’t help but wonder if they missed signs that her condition was more serious.

There’s no set rule for how long to let RAD kids refuse to eat; it depends on the child’s condition. A day passed, then two and three. Gloria still wasn’t eating, but she was running, playing, jumping. Some friends came over for Bible study and later said they saw Gloria with the other children, and then heading upstairs to go to bed.

The next night the family had a late dinner planned. Grace was out, Matt and the boys were downstairs, and Gloria was up in her room. When Grace came home at about 8:30 p.m., Matt went upstairs to get Gloria. That’s when he saw his daughter lying on the floor—foaming at the mouth, her shirt soaking wet.

Matt threw something dry on her and carried her to the car. Doha’s Al Emadi Hospital was only a few blocks away. He made it to the ER at about 9:15. He was kept from the operating room as doctors and nurses flew in and out in a panic. At 9:57, Gloria Afful Huang was declared dead. The cause, the staff told Matt, was cardiac arrest. “I was told she was dead

on arrival,” he later said. Still trying to comprehend what had happened, Matt went home to bring Grace and their sons back to see Gloria one last time.

When they got to the hospital, they were given a brief moment to pray alongside Gloria’s body. Then Matt had to deal with some insurance paperwork. As soon as he was away from the others, a police officer asked him to step outside, where a large SUV was idling at the curb.

Matt was ushered into the backseat. A plainclothes officer started asking him questions. Meanwhile, Matt noticed men in uniform, about ten in all, approaching the SUV, surrounding it entirely, blocking his view of his family.

“WHO IS THIS GIRL?”

The officer was not satisfied, particularly when Matt told him that Gloria was his daughter. “They said, ‘How did she die?’” Matt remembers. “They asked me that ten, 15 times.” He had no answer because he had no idea.

That wasn’t enough for his interrogator. Matt says he was asked “How come you don’t know how she died?” several times. Then the man said, “Oh, you’re a bad father, you’re working too hard?” He was told again and again that he was a bad father.

Inside the hospital, Grace was being questioned, too. “The first question was ‘Who is she?’ ‘She’s my daughter.’ ‘No she’s not, she’s a different color from you.’ ‘She’s my daughter.’ ‘What country are you from?’ ‘I’m American.’ ‘No, you’re not.’ ‘Yes, I am American.’”

Other officers questioned the boys. “I was kind of listening to them,” Grace remembers. “‘Where do you go to school?’ ‘We homeschool.’ ‘What do you do? What do you take?’ ‘We get up and we ...’—going through the whole schedule.” One question seemed especially pointed, given the circumstances. “Do you eat?” the boys were asked.

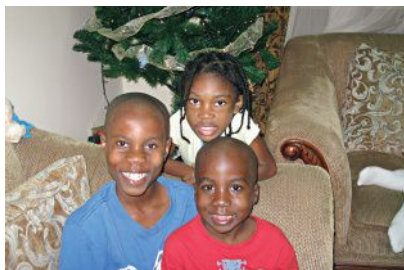
They said yes, they do. “They asked us, like, ‘Did your mom beat your sister? Did they give her food?’” Ezra later recalled. Grace and the boys were brought to one police station, then another, where they were questioned again in rudimentary English. “I had to simplify my language and explain homeschool and adoption,” Grace says. “And they didn’t translate anything for me.”

Matt was brought to the same station. The couple had been up all night when they were asked if they knew someone

Life With and Without Gloria



Matt and Grace with Gloria and Ezra in their living room in Los Angeles in November 2009.



Ezra, Gloria, and Jesse in Doha, Christmas 2012.



Matt arriving at the courthouse handcuffed to another prisoner in November 2013.



Grace and Matt after their release from prison. Still barred from leaving Qatar, they took precautions to avoid being recognized in public.



Ezra and Jesse arriving in Los Angeles with their grandmother in October 2013.



U.S. Ambassador to Qatar Dana Shell Smith escorting the Huangs and their adviser Eric Volz to the airplane in December after their acquittal.



Matt and Grace on their flight back to Los Angeles.



The Huangs reunited with their sons in Los Angeles.

who could take the two boys. After contacting the U.S. embassy, Matt called a friend from their church, who arrived close to dawn. Matt and Grace said goodbye to their boys. The next day, they were charged with murder.

THE VAST MAJORITY OF QATAR'S 2 MILLION

inhabitants are foreigners, there to consult on projects related to oil and, more recently, the upcoming World Cup. But Qatar is no melting pot. Rich Qataris known to back terror groups like Hamas live not far from a strategically important American military base. Expats like the Huangs live almost in a nation within the nation, with their own schools, shops, and churches. In that environment, it is easy to be unaware of Qatar's judicial and political system—unless something goes terribly wrong.

The Huangs had come to Qatar perhaps particularly optimistic about, and even oblivious to, the challenges they'd face there, both as foreigners and, as it turned out, parents of adopted children. At a swift, crowded hearing, a Qatari prosecutor charged the couple with "premeditatively killing Gloria Afful Huang by locking her up in her room in their house and denying her food and drinks for several days with the intent of making her reach the limit of starvation that leads to death."

The Huangs' decision not to send their daughter to a doctor when she hadn't eaten in four days seemed particularly suspect to the court. From the start, the police worked to find evidence that the Huangs had been withholding food from Gloria. They saw a line in the ER's report suggesting that she appeared malnourished; they heard from friends of Matt and Grace about how Gloria hadn't eaten since getting sick on cake; and when they examined the Huangs' house in Doha, they saw a lock on the outside of her bedroom door, with a key in it. The lock had come with the rental—Matt maintains that Gloria had not been locked in her room the night she died—but to the police it was evidence that the Huangs punished her by keeping her in her room.

A month after Gloria's death, an investigator testified that he believed that Matt and Grace weren't parents at all but human traffickers—intending "most likely to either sell their organs or to conduct medical experiments on them." The investigator seemed to point to the very fact of an Asian man and woman's having

three African children as grounds for suspicion: “The adoption process consists of searching for children who are good-looking and well-behaved,” he said, “and who have hereditary features that are similar to those of the parents. But the children connected to this incident are all from Africa, and most of the families there are indigent.”

The boys were sent to an orphanage—a heartbreaking turn. Matt and Grace were sent to separate detention centers. Matt kept to himself for fear of being attacked. He was spared beatings by guards but not protected from other inmates. When he did find people who spoke broken English, he saw how people could be locked up in Qatar on a whim and how his case was, perhaps, not so different from many others. “A lot of the guys are in there for very petty crimes,” he says, “and they’re just stuck in a system that’s broken.”

Grace was held with about 50 women, many of whom were migrant workers and also didn’t speak Arabic. Many were there for what were called “boyfriend cases.” “Which means they saw a man or they met a man who was suspected to be their boyfriend. They didn’t even have to go near a man—they could have had a text message.”

Matt and Grace couldn’t communicate with each other, much less adequately mourn their daughter. Friends from church would reassure them that they’d visited Ezra and Jesse and that the boys were more or less all right. Those same friends tried to vouch for the Huangs in court, only to be turned away. At the couple’s early hearings, a judge would hear 40 cases in 30 minutes. The U.S. embassy sent a representative, and Matt’s employer hired a Qatari attorney, who never visited them in prison. “They would constantly ask for bail,” Matt says, “and we’d be constantly denied.”

Grace’s mother and brother, along with Matt’s parents, came to Qatar. The key to their freedom, they all thought, would be Gloria’s autopsy. Yet that report declared the cause of death to be dehydration and cachexia, a wasting away of the body. The prosecutor took this to mean she had starved to death. The doctor noted that Gloria’s vital organs suggested she had no underlying conditions that might have caused her death.

Matt and Grace’s family commissioned a second opinion after her body was returned to the U.S. Harry Bonnell, a San Diego doctor, wrote to the Qatari court that his examination showed that no tissue samples had been taken from her

organs—evidence, the Huangs say, that at least part of the Qatari autopsy had been botched or fabricated. By the time Bonnell saw the body, however, it was too late for him to make his own assessment of how she died. Based on her history, both Bonnell and a second American medical examiner who reviewed the case suggested that Gloria’s food issues may have masked an undiagnosed problem—a lingering parasite issue or pre-diabetic condition—that may have made her prone to a sudden infection.

As the trial approached, the Huangs’ lawyers submitted documentation showing that their adoptions were legal, sworn statements from friends in Doha attesting to their loving relationships with their children, information about RAD and how it’s treated, and evidence showing Gloria was active in the days before her death. But on the first day of the trial, investigator Ahmad Ishaq told the court he believed Gloria “stayed seven days in the room without food” as a punishment for taking cake.

Then he was asked about human trafficking. “There could be a connection,” Ishaq responded. “The deceased girl was black from Africa ... while the parents have wheaten or white complexion. Those who opt for adoption normally choose beautiful children.”

The prosecution’s other witnesses echoed this theory. The judge ordered the Huangs to remain in jail pending his decision. If found guilty, Matt and Grace faced the death penalty.

FRUSTRATED AND SCARED,

Matt’s parents sought the help of the David House Agency, a Los Angeles-based international-crisis firm founded by Eric Volz. Convicted of murder in Nicaragua a decade ago, Volz was eventually exonerated; he’s since become an adviser for Americans in trouble abroad. Most famously, he advised the family of Amanda Knox, who had been charged with the murder of her roommate in Italy. His clients tend to have an underlying naïveté, Volz says, believing that being an American protects them from the vagaries and injustices of a foreign system when the opposite is often true.

Volz privately urged the U.S. government to take a public stand on the Huangs’ case. At the same time, he sought to draw attention to them in the media. In August 2013, a story was published by Al Jazeera, which is owned by

the Qatari royal family. The article called the matter “a case which lawyers and medical experts in the U.S. say is based on shoddy evidence and poor science,” and cited “a campaign” to release the Huangs. Days later, Volz says, he was contacted by a private representative for the Qatari attorney general, requesting a private meeting.

Volz arranged to see Attorney General Ali bin Fetais al-Marri at a hotel in Paris. “I brought an iPad,” Volz recalls, “with pictures of the Huangs.” There was Gloria with the family at Yellowstone and opening Christmas presents. “She’s cute,” al-Marri said. Then he stopped, Volz says, and glanced around, as if checking for cameras.

“I need this campaign to stop,” al-Marri said. “What do you want?” Volz said he wanted Matt and Grace to be released immediately and for their sons to come home. Al-Marri (whose office did not respond to requests for comment) agreed, says Volz, but said it would take time.

By the fall of 2013, the boys’ travel ban was lifted and they were sent to live with Grace’s mother. But the case against the Huangs continued. In jail, Matt says, he was assaulted by inmates several times, once sexually, the details of which he still won’t discuss.

ON NOVEMBER 6, 2013, the Huangs’ friends were permitted to testify at a new hearing, and despite objections from the prosecutor, the court approved the request for the Huangs to be released until the judge made his decision.

Matt and Grace moved to a small apartment, where they largely kept to themselves. They filled the days by Skyping with their sons, homeschooling them from half a world away. They petitioned the court to be allowed to go home while awaiting the verdict, and when they were turned down, they appealed again to the media. “We have lost our daughter, and our sons have lost their sister,” Matt said in a statement picked up by CNN. “We feel that we have been kidnapped and we just want to go home.”

It was right around then that Matt’s employer sent him a letter asking him to return to work or take an unpaid leave. He was incensed, particularly by MWH’s remarks that it had continued paying Matt his salary and benefits, even though it “was under no obligation to do so.” In Matt’s view, being asked to come back to work while still fighting a murder charge amounted to a forced dismissal. He resigned. (In a statement, the company

said, “MWH incurred hundreds of thousands of dollars toward the cost of Matthew’s criminal defense ... We made several attempts to personally contact him to discuss support and to review available benefits, but those attempts were refused.”)

By then, Matt and Grace had hired a new law firm, Lewis Roca Rothgerber, which filed a formal request to investigate Gloria’s pathology report. Janice Ophoven, a medical examiner with a pediatric specialty, knocked down the starvation theory, writing, “One cannot medically diagnose that a child was starved to death if the child was seen functioning and walking just a day before dying.” That argument seemed to work. On March 27, 2014, the judge threw out the Huangs’ murder charge.

But the case wasn’t over. In the same hearing, the judge suddenly ruled on an entirely new charge. The Huangs, he said, were guilty of child endangerment—committing a criminal act when they did not seek medical attention for their daughter’s refusal to eat.

VOLZ OFTEN REMINDED THE HUANGS THAT THEIR CASE

wasn’t happening in a vacuum. Qatar hosts the largest U.S. air base in the Middle East, and that summer, the two countries were negotiating an \$11 billion arms deal. Two months after the Huangs’ conviction, five members of the Taliban were flown from Guantánamo into Qatar’s custody in exchange for the captured soldier Bowe Bergdahl’s release. From the Rose Garden, Barack Obama personally thanked the emir of Qatar “for his leadership in helping us get it done.”

The State Department has never acknowledged any connection between these events and the Huangs’ case, and no government source would comment for this story. But Volz believes that foreign governments tend to treat cases involving Americans opportunistically and that having Americans in limbo helped Qatar’s bargaining position. “We believe institutional kidnapping is a new form of asymmetric warfare used by small regions to engage larger powers,” Volz says.

On July 31, 2014, after the arms deal was announced, the State Department issued its first public statement urging the Qatari government to lift its travel ban on Matt and Grace. But at a hearing for their appeal of the child-endangerment conviction, a Qatari prosecutor continued to argue that the Huangs had “purchased

the children.” Matt had enough, shouting in open court: “You lie! You lie!” The outburst was reported worldwide. In November, a U.N. monitor assigned to evaluate the independence of Qatari judges and lawyers sent a heated communication to the emir, arguing that what was happening to the Huangs appeared to be a violation of international law.

Despite the renewed attention, on November 30, when Matt and Grace arrived at the court for the verdict of their appeal, they had low expectations. Listening to a translator as the judge spoke, they heard the words “three years” and assumed that was the sentence, but then it became clear that “he was quoting all the things we had provided in our written arguments,” Matt says. “And at the end, he said, ‘They’re declared innocent.’”

They were stunned: After nearly two years of prosecution and detention, neither expected a complete exoneration. Grace remembers thinking, *I’m not going to believe it until we’re in the air*. Hours later, the U.S. ambassador accompanied the Huangs to the airport, but as they waited to board, immigration officers confiscated their passports. It took three days—and a call from John Kerry to the Qatari foreign minister—before they could fly home.

Matt and Grace landed in L.A. on December 8, 2014. The sons they hadn’t seen in almost two years ran into their arms. Only Gloria was missing.

IN MAY, MATT AND GRACE agreed to meet me in Volz’s office. They live a few hours outside Seattle now, near Grace’s family and away from most everything else. They are still fragile, still reconciling what happened with their trust in the essential good in the world.

Matt isn’t working yet. “I had a lot of dreams and hopes once,” he says, “and now I’m in a phase where frankly I don’t know the future.” The couple is suing MWH Global for negligence and wrong-

“They asked us,
‘Did your mom beat your sister?
Did they give her food?’”

ful dismissal. Beyond seeking financial compensation, the Huangs hope to set a precedent for international companies on proper crisis-management measures. “I do believe that American firms have the responsibility to take care of their people,” he says. Neither he nor Grace had been warned, he says, that a multiracial family would provoke suspicion in Qatar, that adoption is prohibited there, that police contact can be treacherous.

Of course, it’s also true that such things never occurred to them, either. They felt safe and insulated—both as guests working on an important project and as Americans. They also seemed to have overestimated Gloria’s resilience when they decided to relocate. Major changes can be hard on any adopted child, especially those with Gloria’s issues. “They’re incredibly sensitive to transitions,” says Kathryn Jens, a psychologist who has treated hundreds of adopted children and who lectures about RAD. “It can be very simple things like a parent taking a trip or a parent getting sick for a day or two.” It may only have been a matter of time, Jens says, before Gloria relapsed and refused food. Still, it’s unlikely her refusal to eat could have killed her by itself. The Huangs’ independent medical examiner suggested that Gloria may have had an undiagnosed nutritional malabsorption issue. “Such a problem,” she wrote in her report, “would have been exacerbated by Gloria’s anorexic eating cycles.”

Grace answers every question about Gloria haltingly, as if she were about to be taken from her again. She doesn’t know if she is even meant to know why her daughter died, she says quietly. She struggles with “being able to say, ‘I don’t have to know.’” For Matt, the circumstances of Gloria’s death play constantly in his mind. “I had to get to the point where I trusted that God is in charge,” he says, his voice wavering in a way that suggests he may not be there yet. ■

THE CUT

The mezzanine of Gaultier's headquarters, where interns are working on a special project for Swarovski.



STITCH

Inside the elite sewing circles of Paris, where the tricks of the



CRAFT

couture trade are being passed from one generation to the next. *By* CATHY HORYN

T

HE PHRASE SHE USED WAS *bon tombé du vêtement*, referring to how a garment falls on the body. Jacqueline Smeyers Picot, the chief of Jean Paul

Gaultier's atelier, was saying that it's the most important thing she has learned in 40 years of dressmaking. The effect in a dress is lyrical.

For me, the real drama of couture is not on the runway, where the collections were just shown, but inside the atelier, where nimble fingers try to conjure a field of flowers out of tiny feathers, among other acts of alchemy performed on an extremely tight schedule. Aside from the rigor of the system, the key distinction in a couture garment is that nearly everything is made by hand. Why? Because you have more control in crafting exactly what the designer wants, and also because cutting and sewing clothes by hand gives a "roundness" that contrasts with the flatness of machine-made clothes. A skirt with volume, for example, looks that way because of hand techniques. "The interfacing, the small stitches, the toile hold the fabric and the shape," explains Monique Bailly, a head tailor at Dior and a star of the recent documentary *Dior and I*.

The clothes may be extravagant, but the work is unpretentious. A couture atelier is a glorified sewing circle, with older hands showing the greenhorns how it's done, and everybody quietly gabbing as they work. Federica Papalini, who recently joined the 75 seamstresses at Valentino as an apprentice, says, "You have to be very meticulous. Details are important. But you have incredible teachers in the girls who have more experience." Bailly's apprentice Meghan Cossec spoke too about the continuity of "generations following each other."

Today, young people like Papalini see couture as an opportunity rather than as a dead end—a huge difference from 20 years ago. Pierpaolo Piccioli of Valentino says, "There's a new dignity to it. Young people see the art of couture." The house of Valentino will soon open a dressmaking school in Rome, taught by some of the *premières*, including Antonietta De Angelis and Elide Morelli—with the house for 30 and 48 years, respectively. The nine-month program will have room for ten students.

Not long ago, I asked Karl Lagerfeld what makes something "couture," and for once he was stumped: "It's difficult to say." Maybe couture is the idea of something being produced only once, a sense of its ephemerality. But it is the opposite, too. As Bailly points out: "Hand-made gives longevity to a garment. The garment, so to speak, is eternal." ■





1. Diana Bouifaci (left) has been at Valentino for 12 years; Federica has been an apprentice for seven months.

2. Valentin, 22, is working with Patricia, who's been at Dior for nearly 25 years, to create plissé pleats in toile.

3. Nishtha, 21, an intern at Gaultier, is embroidering a body stocking with Swarovski crystals, one by one.

4. Monica is working on a petticoat in Dior's atelier flou, where the elaborate evening dresses are made.



MAGNUM PHOTOS

LEFT: Lydie Brochot, première main at Gaultier, stitching a skirt for the show.
RIGHT: Seamstresses at the Valentino atelier sew a lace dress onto a fit model.





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CHEAP
EATS
2015



THIS HEAPING one of the dozens Cheap Eats (p. 54). trends of the moment, a city by walking it; we Gravesend, Brooklyn;

SPOONFUL of rice and pickles from the Williamsburg pop-up **Mr. Curry** is only of chile-flecked, herb-dappled delicacies we direct you to in our annual edition of As always, the focus is on the new and the affordable, with forays into the most compelling like food courts, Japanese *izakayas*, and fried-chicken sandwiches. Some say you learn say the better way is by eating it. So set your course for Elmhurst, Queens; Spanish Harlem; and Chinatown (always Chinatown). There is much to savor in every corner. Here's your guide.

BEST BETS



OCafe Coco Shack: arroz con leche (\$4); tamarind-coconut popcorn (\$5).

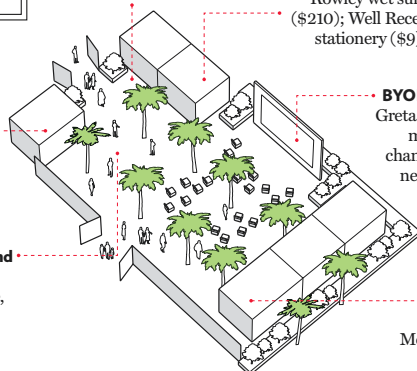
Tropical-plant garden and wellness: yoga classes next to palm, pineapple, and passion-fruit trees; hibiscus plants.

Mud bath: designed by artist Frank Trainor; \$7 per treatment.

The Notion: Cynthia Rowley wet suits (\$210); Well Received stationery (\$9).

BYOB movie nights: Greta Gerwig-curated movies about changing New York neighborhoods.

Feather: Wax & Cruz Moon shibori-cotton hats (\$78).



ASK A SHOP CLERK

Richard Oates, former chef de cuisine at Freemans, just opened East River Skate Shop (86 Greenpoint Ave.).



Why the career change? I found myself having to be an asshole to get people to listen to me. I got back into skateboarding a while ago, as a way to blow off steam, so the jump to a skate shop seemed logical. We're supporting local brands like 5Boro, which did a line of airplane-motif decks designed by the German artist Stefan Marx (\$49). Actually, the guys who built Freemans built my display case. They all skate, so they were stoked.

SIDE BY SIDE

➔ Two new futuristic man-clothes flagships.



BONOBOS GUIDESHOP
95 Fifth Ave.



MINISTRY OF SUPPLY
138 Wooster St.
(opens July 17)

In pre-Warby Parker days, two Stanford business-school students sell better-fitting khakis online.

Origins

In 2012, three MIT students Kickstarter-funded a high-tech, odor-controlling dress shirt.

Bright washed chinos (\$88) with a curved waistline to match the natural shape of the midsection; short-sleeved shirts with tapered-fit and in-house-designed prints (\$68).

Product

The Apollo dress shirt (\$98) uses NASA-developed body-heat-regulating technology; the Gemini shirt (\$148) is designed with underarm perforations for ventilation.

4,000 square feet (its biggest space yet) with 20 style "guides" on call.

Store

The research-lab-inspired space has a coffee bar and open workspace with Wi-Fi.

2x2

➔ Beach Pails

For kids or grown-ups.

BEER

SAND

COLLAPSIBLE



Silicone bucket, \$40 at vat19.com.



Infusio Living collapsible bucket, \$30 at amazon.com.

METAL



Artland Oasis steel pail with bottle opener, \$15 at Bed, Bath and Beyond.



Red metal sand pail, \$16 at bellalunatoys.com.

MOVING IN

This month, record collector Javi Velazquez opened HiFi Records in vinyl-starved Astoria (23-19 Steinway St.).



"When you walk into the store, I set up six plywood record racks carrying about 4,500 albums: Elvis Costello, the B-52s, Calvin Harris, Madonna, you name it. Facing the front window is a counter with turntables where you can try out records as you drink drip coffee from our back bar.

I'm a project manager for a construction company, so most of the material here, like the wood paneling, is recycled from old demolition projects. I also dusted off my old lava lamp and amplifiers from the '70s. I have the original "Purple Rain" in a purple 45. That's for sale if the price is right."

TOP FIVE

➔ One Kings Lane's head designer, Alexander Reid, calls out some of his favorite pieces now available at the online retailer's first IRL studio (by appointment only; 205 Hudson St.; 212-430-7800). Consultations and shipping are free.



"The **Solana bench** (\$649) is wrapped in rope and upholstered in raised velvet, but when you touch it, it actually feels like terry cloth."



"This **blue-and-white pitcher** (\$56) is handmade in Portugal, so each one looks different. It's great for summer parties."



"I love this **brass-and-black chair** (\$1,199) because it looks like a flower, in a way."



"I have three of these **porcelain garden stools** (\$149) in my apartment. I use them as side tables and extra seating when people come over."



"This is a **vintage rattan-and-cane ottoman** (\$279). It's superlight, so you can toss it in between chairs or use it as an end table."

BENJAMIN KARASIK,
Student

Congratulations!

What are you graduating from? High school.

I'm valedictorian—well, not really. My school actually doesn't do that stuff, but if they did, I would be. I had the highest GPA: a 4.0, a 96-point-something. I'm going to Brooklyn College next year as part of the Macaulay Honors College.

Would you ever live anywhere other than New York?

Maybe France. I lived there when I was in middle school, in the Charente-Maritime region. I liked the fresh air, and the stars, and the quiet nights. And I loved snails.

Big summer plans?

I'm probably going to Russia to stay with my grandmother, who's a really old-fashioned babushka type of lady, for a few weeks in a small house in the middle of the woods, without internet, without TV. I want to spend some time in nature before college.

INTERVIEW BY
ALEXIS SWERDLOFF



LIGHTNING ROUND

Neighborhood:
Upper East Side.

Favorite subject:
AP English.

Last good book read:
To the Lighthouse.

Last good movie seen:
Nightcrawler.

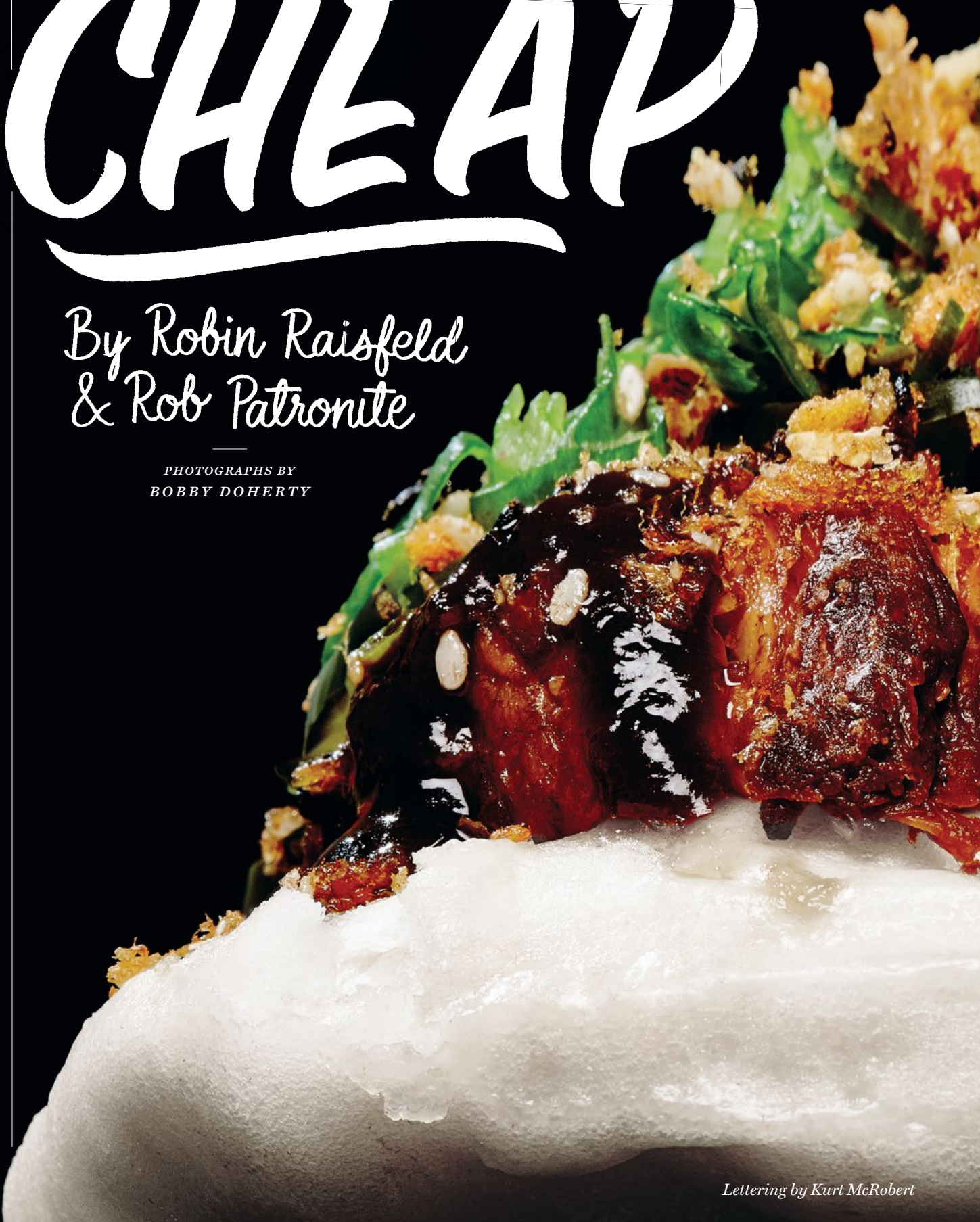
Preferred social media:
Snapchat. "You don't have to take the best or most perfect picture, like with Instagram, just what you're doing at the moment; you can just show yourself."

THE UNDERGROUND GOURMET'S

CHEAP

By Robin Raisfeld
& Rob Patronite

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
BOBBY DOHERTY



Lettering by Kurt McRobert



EATS

EVERYTHING

under

*\$*25 →

*East Wind
Snack Shop's
pork-belly
Gwaco bao.*

IN A YEAR WHEN the biggest news in downscale dining was the Shake Shack IPO, and when every other start-up aims to be “the next Chipotle,” you might think the market for independent mom-and-pops was evaporating. But you’d be wrong: This annual survey of the best new places to eat cheaply unearths one-of-a-kind destinations for hyperseasonal Anglo-Indian curry, home-style Vietnamese, new-school empanadas and old-school spinach pies, Japanese curry, and even French-bread pizza. Of course, if you want a burger, we’ve got that, too, in a Brooklyn neighborhood yet unscouted by Danny Meyer’s minions. Also on the sandwich front, fried chicken is having a moment, headlined by David Chang’s carefully plotted advance into Chick-fil-A territory with Fuku. But you can’t live by deep-fried thighs alone, which might explain the simultaneous rise of the grain bowl (even Fuku has one!), a nutrient-delivery system that marks the intersection of musty macrobiotic convention and avocado-fanned West Coast cool. And that’s not all. We delve deep into regional Thai in Elmhurst, Queens, and demystify the esoteric Japanese snacks popping up around town. We navigate the city’s newest food courts to find the best things to eat on a budget, and hack menus that don’t seem so cheap on the surface but harbor hidden deals on unexpected culinary delights. Not, come to think of it, unlike New York itself.



THE CHEAP LIST

Mr. Curry

378 Metropolitan Ave., nr. Havemeyer St.,
Williamsburg; 718-387-4777

Rebecca Collerton will be the first to tell you she’s not cooking authentic Indian food at the thrice-weekly (Thursday through Saturday nights) pop-up that occupies Saltie, the Williamsburg sandwich shop she co-owns. She grew up in England, after all, not Mumbai, and is channeling cherished memories of Manchester’s Anglo-Indian curry houses. But because this is 2015 Brooklyn, and because Collerton’s a talented improvisational chef, her menu is as refreshingly seasonal as it is vibrantly seasoned. There might be green tomatoes in her paratha or curry vinaigrette and Cheddar in her salad, depending on the day, and pickles that will get your juices flowing in practically everything.

Superiority Burger

430 E. 9th St., nr. Ave. A; 212-256-1192

Punk-rock drummer and former fine-dining pastry chef extraordinaire, total badass and wearer of

paper soda-jerk hats—if you were looking for someone to give vegetarian fast food a spectacular high-low makeover, to make it cool, cravable, and also, you know, nutritious, you could do worse than Brooks Headley. Everything on his Superiority menu—veggie burger, *faux* Sloppy Joe, burnt-broccoli salad—is mysteriously satisfying and as good as you’ve heard, except the Hippy Wrap, which is better than you’ve heard. Nor do daily specials like vegan pump-cheese nachos disappoint. Have your vanilla-labne-gelato-and-strawberry-sorbet twist while you wait for the savory stuff. (Yes, there’s a wait.) Then take your salubrious fast-food feast to a Tompkins Square Park bench, or, if one’s available, grab an old-fashioned swing-tray seat at the restaurant and imagine you’re dining at the late, great, decidedly non-vegetarian Prime Burger on 51st Street.

Early Coffee & Sandwich Shop

967 Manhattan Ave., nr. India St.,
Greenpoint; 718-383-6963

It’s not that the drip, the cold brew, and the flat whites aren’t terrific, but why give the java top billing with all

*Early's Zappie
sandwich.*



TAXONOMY

BEYOND RAMEN

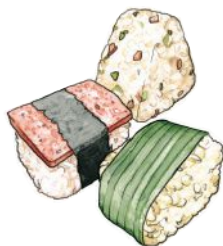
Here's how to tell your taiyaki from your takoyaki—just two of the snacky Japanese specialties proliferating at New York's newest *izakayas* (bar-food-focused Japanese pubs) and Asian-inflected fast-food joints.



Okonomiyaki The name of this customizable savory pancake translates to “as you like it, grilled.” The garnishes are a constant, though: thick, sweetish sauce, mayo, and bonito flakes. (At *Ganso Yaki*, 515 Atlantic Ave., at Third Ave., Downtown Brooklyn; 646-927-0303.)



Taiyaki Snack cakes shaped like sea bream, a fish so esteemed in Japan it's often served at weddings. Big at street fairs and temple festivals, and typically filled with bean paste. (At *Otafuku x Medetai*, 220 E. 9th St., nr. Third Ave.; 646-998-3438.)



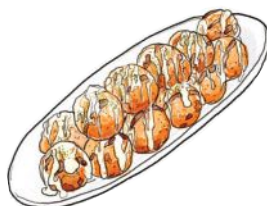
Onigiri Seasoned rice balls ubiquitous in Japanese convenience stores and lunch boxes, variously stuffed and often bound with nori. Pickled plum and eel are common fillings; in Hawaii, a Spam variant is practically the state snack. (At *Hanamizuki*, 143 W. 29th St., nr. Seventh Ave.; 212-695-5533.)



Temaki Cone-shaped hand rolls wrapped in nori, and the building block of what one local proto-chain hopes to be the Chipotle of sushi. They're “customer designed” and come with signature sauce. Temaki burritos, too! (At *Uma Temakeria*, 64 Seventh Ave., nr. 14th St.; 646-360-3260.)



Obanyaki Thick, soft, coin-shaped cakes made in iron molds. Served at festivals and filled traditionally with azuki bean paste, now with everything from apple custard to curry. (At *Mocu-Mocu*, 746 Tenth Ave., nr. 51st St.; 212-765-0197.)



Takoyaki No octopus ball before its time! The spheres cook in circular molds and are flipped for even browning. Then, an anointing of mayo, a Worcestershire-like sauce, seaweed powder, and bonito flakes. (At *Otafuku x Medetai*.)

CHEAP EATS

that sandwich magic happening out back in the kitchen? The basics—roast beef, chicken, bacon-egg-and-cheese—handily exceed expectations. The star of the show, though, is the open-faced Zappie, the Polish mom-and-pop owners' take on a popular Warsaw street snack. It consists of sautéed onions and mushrooms spread onto a split baguette, smothered with Fontina, then oven-toasted until the cheese oozes, with DIY packets of Heinz on the side. It's what a Stouffer's French Bread Pizza dreams of becoming.

Little Pearl Saigon

9 Bay 35th St., nr. 86th St., Gravesend
718-996-8808

The No. 3 entrée, the \$6.45 Vietnamese-style pork chop, is pounded thin, cooked through to a dull greige, served over broken rice, and (truth be told) kind of chewy. And yet, by some miracle of marination, you swear that this budget-friendly chop is among the most delicious you've ever tasted. For 50 cents more, you can get the No. 1 Chicken Lemongrass (\$6.95), which is even better than the chop, at least according to host-server-owner Theresa Tran (whose sister Duc Tran helps run the kitchen). “That's why it's No. 1,” she says. Is that her idea of up-selling? Also worth the splurge: a fragrant pho and the occasional special rice-flour crêpes known as bánh xèo. Granted, Gravesend is a long way to go for modest, home-style Vietnamese cooking, but a sweeter little family-run storefront you won't find in all the five boroughs.

Spaghetti Incident

231 Eldridge St., nr. Stanton St.
646-896-1446

If you wonder why anyone would venture out for what is inarguably the easiest thing to cook at home, here is your answer: a recent fresh whole-wheat-spaghetti special at this new pasta parlor, dressed with pistachio pesto and chunks of summery zucchini. Of the nine other long-noodle options, we like the bucatini all'amatriciana, a worthy version of that porky Roman classic. Italian-expat restaurants always seem to get wacky with the salads, and the Incident is no exception; one night's thatch of arugula tossed with hunks of mango and avocado and dappled with black and white sesame seeds was an unex-

pected delight. And should you wish to supplement your carbs with more carbs, arancini are priced per piece (\$3; two-ball minimum).

East Wind Snack Shop

471 16th St., nr. Prospect Park W., Windsor Terrace; 929-295-0188

Of the many persuasive clues that East Wind isn't your standard-issue dumpling shack, the dry-aged-beef potstickers rank highest. The innards are rich and funky, and the golden-seared wrapper housemade, like all the rest of chef Chris Cheung's markedly fresh, springy, and steamy buns and baos, filled with everything from Niman Ranch pork belly (in the Gwaco) to a hidden dab of foie gras. With its counter stools and bubble teas, the snug storefront has a vintage luncheonette vibe and an entirely modern culinary sensibility.

C&B Cafe

178 E. 7th St., nr. Ave. B
212-674-2985

A good cup of joe and a decent BEC is all you ask of an unassuming place whose letters stand for coffee and breakfast. What you get: an escapee from Masa and before that Tavern on the Green brewing your excellent pour-over. And chef-owner Ali Sahin, who did fine-dining time uptown at health-obsessed Rouge Tomato, now repenting for those butterless, salt-free days by cooking what might be the East Village's best breakfast sandwiches. You want the juicy housemade chorizo patty with scrambled eggs on a squishy brioche roll. Unless, that is, you're craving the juicy housemade merguez sausage with Cheddar and egg on a supersize croissant. For carbophobes, there are big bowls filled with all sorts of delicious combinations like heirloom beans and pork belly or pulled chicken and pastured eggs. There's no shortage of coffee bars that serve food in New York. C&B is the one you wish you had on your block.

Taste of Northern China

88 E. Broadway, entrance on Forsyth St.
646-229-8107

It's not that Taste of Northern China is as hard to find as everyone says it is. It's that after you've found it, you



*Taste of
Northern
China's
skewers.*



Lumpia Shack's BBQ Bowl With Rice Noodles and Chicken, \$13. Filipino barbecue meets bowl food at this pop-up Seaport Smorgasburg stand, where banana-ketchup-marinated chicken thighs crown cold noodles and calamansi-dressed greens. Add a \$2 egg. 19 Fulton St., nr. Front St.; daily through October.



Izakaya's Cumin-Lamb Rice Bowl
A Japanese pub's half-cart homage with yakitori-grilled lamb skewers, shiso-pickled onions, and the iconic condiments. 565 Vanderbilt Ave., at Pacific St., Prospect Heights; 547-425-9570.

TRENDLET

THE BOWL REV



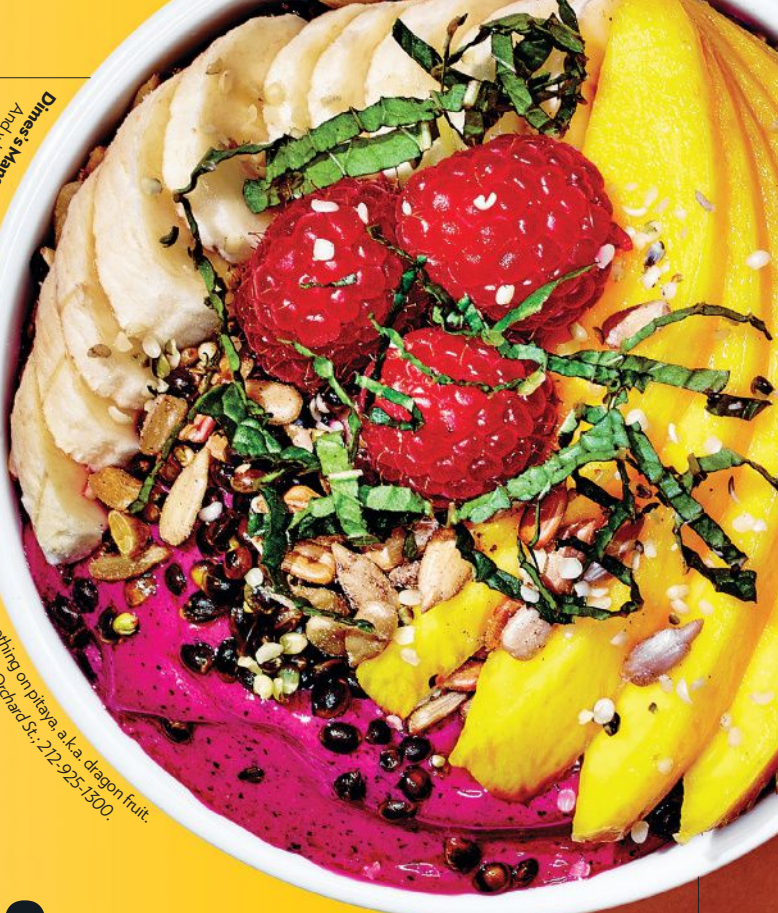
El Rey Coffee Bar & Luncheonette's Grains & Crudité Salad, small for \$8. The kale is massaged with almond dressing, and the farro is mingled with pecans, and the egg is pickled with beets. 100 Stanton St., nr. Ludlow St.; 212-260-3592.



Greenpoint Fish & Lobster Co.'s Tokubetsu Rice Bowl With Squid, \$15. Grilled calamari rests in rice seasoned with furikake and the farro is mingled with beets. 100 Stanton St., nr. Ludlow St.; 212-260-3592.



Dine's Mango Piya Bowl, \$10. As far as equatorial superfoods go, we're not talking about dragon fruit. And what's a breakfast bowl without some sunflower and hemp seeds? 49 Canal St., nr. Orchard St.; 212-225-1300.

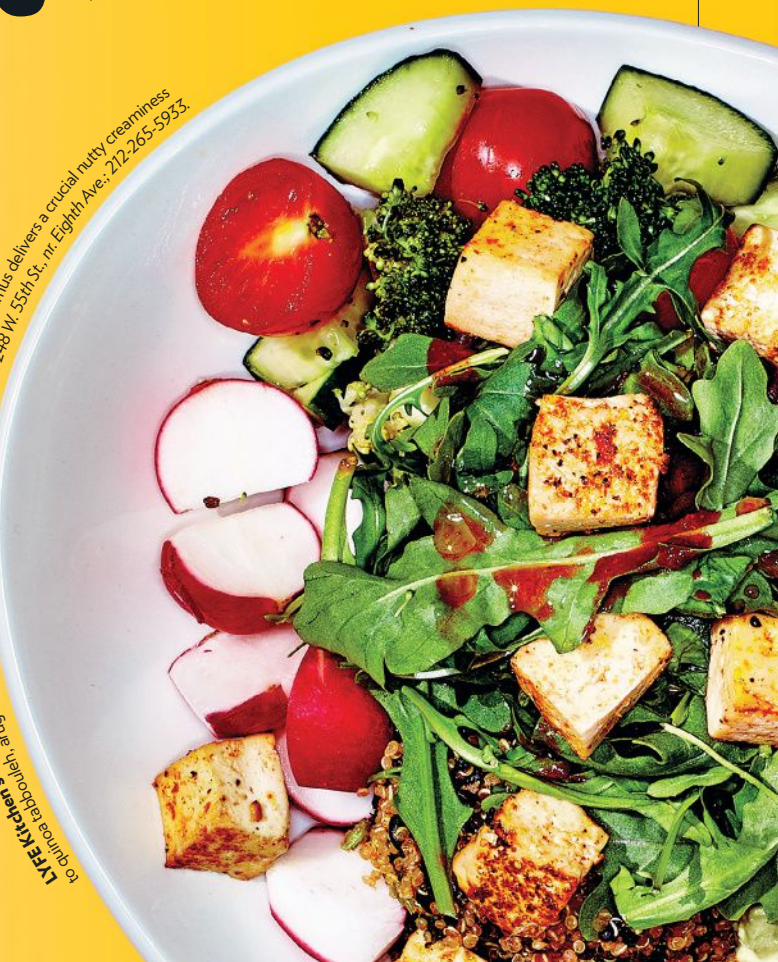


OLUTION

The macrobiotic bowl of yore has lost its fusty image and morphed into a hot new meal category—a blank canvas for inventive chefs and fast-casual chains alike.



LYFE Kitchen's Quinoa Crunch Bowl With Garlic-Lime Tofu, \$11. Edamame hummus delivers a crucial nutty creaminess to quinoa (a bowllet), and dungeness crab and arugula add a little something extra. 248 W. 55th St., nr. Eighth Ave.; 212-265-5933.



CHEAP EATS

wish perhaps you hadn't. When food bloggers describe the place as a hole in the wall, holes in the wall consider libel suits. To get in the door when there's another customer inside you have to do that thing you do to get out of your car when you've parked too close to somebody's Nissan Armada. And the phrase "looks clean enough to eat off the floor" did not originate here. In short, it's a dump, but a dump with soul and some cheap and wonderful food. Get the thick and chewy "cold skin" wheat noodles mingled with bits of wheat gluten in a vinegary sauce; a Chinese chopped-pork "burger"; and some skewers from a list of 34—we recommend the lamb, the cauliflower, the hot dog, and especially the rice cakes. They're all aggressively seasoned with cumin and chile powder and cooked over hardwood charcoal the way they do it on the street in Flushing.

Baba's Pierogies

295 Third Ave., nr. 1st St.,
Gowanus; 718-222-0777

You can't open a single-item comfort-food specialty shop these days without a sense of humor and a willingness to cater to the Tic Tac Mixers generation in the flavor department. Thus Baba's, named after the owner's pierogi-master grandmother, stuffs its dumplings with everything from a mixture of jalapeño, potato, and Cheddar to mac 'n' cheese—a soporific combo that picks up where the ziti-topped pizza left off. In spite of these efforts, the best pierogi on the menu is a classic—a surprisingly unstodgy boiled variety filled with a piquant sauerkraut and tossed in butter and chives (\$8; get them topped with sautéed mushrooms for 75 cents extra). We imagine Baba would back us up on this.

The Food Sermón

355 Rogers Ave., at Sullivan Pl.,
Crown Heights; 718-484-7555

Chef-owner Rawlston Williams might not like the comparison, but there is a suggestion of Chipotle in his "island bowl," a customizable array of starch, sauce, and protein. And yet it's doubtful that Steve Ells has ever envisioned a combination like panko-dusted lamb shank with coconut-ginger sauce and chickpeas and rice. And in a neighborhood

lousy with roti, Williams's are flaky and tender, perfect for scooping up morsels of curry goat mingled with chickpeas and sweet potato.

Empanadas, Son!

174 Delancey St., nr. Clinton St.
646-882-8136

Three restaurant-industry veterans have opened an Argentine empanaderia in the shadow of the Williamsburg Bridge: a chef who worked at La Grenouille and La Silhouette; the former GM of Salumeria Rosi; and her husband, who ran a joint in Buenos Aires long enough to develop a taste for these baked stuffed pastries. Each empanada has its own *repulgue*, or pastry-fold pattern, so they're easy to ID. Of the various old- and new-school styles, we're partial to the soup-in-hand-pie-form French Onion Fugazetta, the red-wine-braised Beef Burgundy, and the Chicken Curry. For dessert, try the sweet-tart Guava Cheesecake version with Toby's Estate cold-brewed coffee on tap.

Huertas Window

107 First Ave., nr. 7th St.
212-228-4490

The East Village pintxos bar's new Basque-hot-dog takeout window might not be the Coney Island boardwalk, but isn't this more or less how Shake Shack got its start? The dogs are made from the restaurant's own pimentón-spiked chistorra sausage—thinner and smoother than chorizo but just as rich and garlicky. They're also dressed with aioli and a housemade piquillo-pepper mostarda that might be the best thing to land on a frankfurter since French's. And, in keeping with age-old Basque tradition, the kitchen serves them on Martin's potato buns. To wash down the dogs: horchata slushies made from chufa (tiger nuts) instead of rice. Saturdays and Sundays only.

Pi Bakerie

512 Broome St., nr. Thompson St.
212-226-2701

If your knowledge of phyllo dough begins and ends with spanakopita, Pi Bakerie will expand your horizons. In fact, the sleek café seems determined to spread the Greek-food gospel,

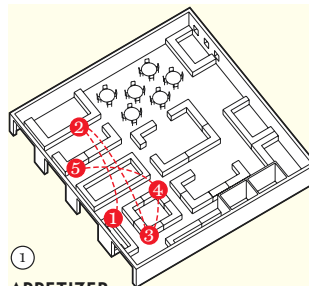


HACK

MALL

GANSEVOORT MARKET

52 Gansevoort St., nr. Greenwich St.
gansmarket.com



1

APPETIZER

Bangkok Bar's **Moo Palo pork-belly bun**, with five-spice belly braised to a butterlike consistency, a tangy herbal sauce, and cilantro.....\$5



2

ENTRÉE

Luzzo's **arugula slice**, with Parmigiano shavings, fresh tomato sauce, a long prosciutto slice, and enough greens to claim it's a salad.....\$6



3

SIDE

Donostia's **Jody montadito**, with anchovies and sea-salt butter.....\$3

4

DESSERT

Yiaouri's fresh Greek-style **goat yogurt with sour cherries**.....\$6

5

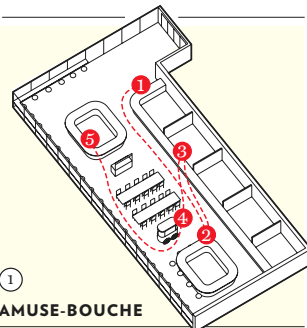
DRINK

Champion Coffee **cold brew**.....\$5

TOTAL \$25

CITY KITCHEN

700 Eighth Ave., at 44th St., second fl.
citykitchen.rownyc.com



1

AMUSE-BOUCHE

Gabriela's Taqueria's **chicken empanadas**, served two to a plate with spicy chile-mayo dipping sauce.....\$3.25



2

APPETIZER

Azuki sushi's surprisingly fresh, clean **yellowtail-and-scallop roll**, which sells for the semi-bargain price of.....\$6



3

MAIN COURSE

The ingenious **"Falafel Korean,"** which the cooks at Ilii Box construct with falafel, kimchee, and freshly warmed pita.....\$7.58

4

SIDE

Excellent **fries** from the Whitman's burger stand, served old-school style in a silver cellophane bag.....\$4

5

DESSERT

The glazed **lemon-poppy doughnut** at Dough, which is so sugary and substantial that you may not have to eat again for at least the next 24 hours.....\$3

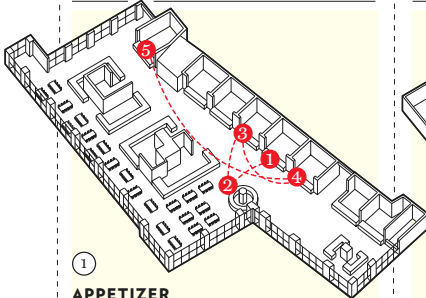
TOTAL \$23.83

MANEUVERS

Mapping the best \$25-and-under feasts at New York's newest indoor food courts.
BY MARY JANE WEEDMAN, ADAM PLATT, AND CHRIS CROWLEY

HUDSON EATS AT BROOKFIELD PLACE

225 Liberty St., nr. West St.
brookfieldplaceny.com



1 APPETIZER

Queue up with JPMorgan interns for a side of Mighty Quinn's **burnt-end-spiked baked beans**small, \$3.10

2 ENTRÉE

Arrive before 5 p.m. to try Black Seed's **apple, ricotta, and honey sandwich on an everything bagel**\$6.50



3 SIDE

Num Pang's acidic, spicy, three-cabbage **Cambodian slaw** provides a richness break\$3.50



4 DESSERT

Yunnan Kitchen sister Northern Tiger's housemade **soft serve** (recent flavor of the week: peanut butter)\$4

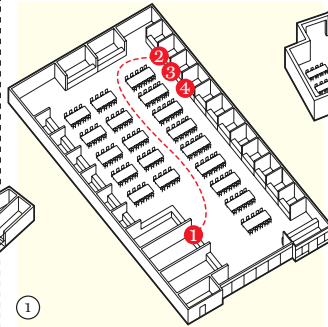
5 DRINK

Olive's **Lemonesso**, a sparkling lemonade with an invigorating shot of Stumptown Hair Bender espresso\$5

TOTAL \$22.10

NEW YORK FOOD COURT

133-35 Roosevelt Ave., nr. Prince St., Flushing



1 APPETIZER

Few things are as refreshing on a hot summer day as the slippery, cooling **bean noodles** from Szechuan Taste\$3.75



2 ENTRÉE

Peng Shun's gargantuan "**full plate lamb**" with chewy hand-pulled noodles, tender boiled potatoes, and delightfully gamy bone-on lamb in a slurry of thick, zingy sauce seasoned with Sichuanese chile-bean paste\$9

3 SIDE

Nibble **Diverse Dim Sum's sliced-beef sandwich wrap**, and maybe even dip that thin, crispy flatbread into your full plate lamb's sauce\$4

4 DESSERT

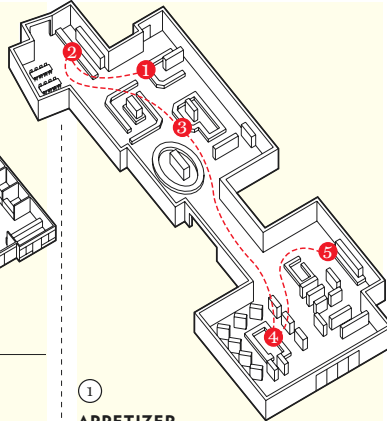
The **Oreo milk tea** from **Happy-lemon** blends the classic American cookie into earthy tea, worth it alone for the custardy finish\$3.50



TOTAL \$20.25

LE DISTRICT AT BROOKFIELD PLACE

225 Liberty St., nr. West St.
ledistrict.com



1 APPETIZER

The fromagerie's mini **Brie-and-maple-syrup sandwiches** on ficelle\$4

2 ENTRÉE

The boulangerie's **quiche of the day** (recently asparagus and bacon)\$6.50

3 SIDE

The charcuterie's **olives** (Picholines)per 1/4 lb., \$2



4 DESSERT

The Garden District's salad bar becomes a generous-with-tasting-spoonfuls mousse bar at 4 p.m.; try **two mousses**, like Dulcey and 70 percent chocolate, and speculoos-crumb toppingsmall, 1 topping, \$4.75

5 DRINK

The grocery sells Alain Milliat's raisin rosé **Cabernet juice**\$6



TOTAL \$23.25

And One Outdoors



EVERY SUNDAY AFTERNOON through Labor Day, a tiered platform beneath the Metro-North railroad viaduct in East Harlem transforms into **Vendy Plaza**, a collaboration between a street-vendor advocacy group and La Marqueta, the La Guardia-era enclosed market turned food-business incubator across the street. Vendors rotate often, so there's always something new to taste. But consider yourself lucky if your trip coincides with the presence of **Angel Jimenez**, whose **crackly crusted, succulent roast pork** (not to mention his machete-wielding antics) has made his truck, La Piraña Lechonera, a South Bronx landmark. And then there's **Denisse Lina Chavez**, the plucky Bronx bodega owner who recently closed her restaurant, Carnitas el Atoradero, but can be found below the train tracks **griddling picaditas** and offering samples of her signature dishes to all comers. Be on the lookout, too, for a Brazilian stand run by a vendor who operates halal chicken-and-rice carts during the week but is testing the waters for her native **beef panekkas, saucy ground-meat-stuffed crêpes** that taste like a cross between lasagna and cannelloni in the best possible way. Vendy Plaza isn't just a market; it's an informal focus group and culinary-career launchpad. For many of these hopefuls, it's East Harlem today, street-food-world domination tomorrow.

➔ Park Ave. at 115th St.; vendyawards.streetvendor.org/plaza R.R. & R.P.

TRENDLET

BATTER UP



El Cortez's Chicken Buddies

\$11; 17 Ingham St., nr. Bogart St.,
East Williamsburg; 347-599-2976

Stephen Tanner's terrific fried-chicken "sliders" come with lettuce, pickle, mayonnaise, and an **overgrown toothpick holding all four of them together** like a shish kebab.

So, yes, the skewer trendlet has met the fried-chicken-sandwich trendlet.



Uncle Sam's NYC Chicken Samwich

\$7; 307 Fifth Ave., nr. 32nd St.; 212-213-3938
The **Chinese burger chain's American-style**

fried-chicken sandwich is surprisingly spot-on. The white meat is moist enough, the panko crust is remarkably crisp, the black-bean mayo and bread-and-butter pickles add richness and tang, and the bun is as soft and squishy as cotton candy. Even the kale confetti doesn't detract.



Egg Shop's DIY Egg-Cheese-and-Fried-Chicken

\$14; 151 Elizabeth St., nr. Kenmare St.
646-666-0810

You may have to do your best *Five Easy Pieces* Jack Nicholson impression for the waitress, but it's worth it. Order the sunny-side egg with Cheddar and hot sauce on a "panini" roll (\$7), plus a side of fried chicken (\$7), and ask the kitchen to put the chicken on the sandwich, or just **assemble it yourself**.

Sky-high beef prices and the enduring sandwich craze have laid the groundwork for a new between-the-bread obsession: the fried-chicken sandwich. No longer the sole province of fast-food chains and southern-inflected Williamsburg diners, it has become a business plan for industry titans like David Chang and Danny Meyer, who just the other day—too late for pre-deadline sampling—unveiled Shake Shack's own ChickenShack sandwich at three Brooklyn locations. Here, the new breed of birds on buns.



Meat Hook Sandwich's Hot Chicken

\$13; 495 Lorimer St., nr. Powers St.,
Williamsburg; 718-302-4665

The recipe calls for **chicken thighs, a little meat glue, a hot-sauce bath**, and a few techniques that would do Nathan Myhrvold proud. The result: a crisp puck of almost-porky meat perfectly tailored to fit its soft bun. Plus bread-and-butter slaw to cool things down.



Fuku's Spicy Fried-Chicken Sandwich

\$8; 163 First Ave., nr. 10th St.; no phone

David Chang's latest food line is long but moves quickly, and the reward is ample: a fried-chicken sandwich that is as crisp and juicy as any you've ever had, and with enough thigh meat to make about eight El Cortez Chicken Buddies. The key, apparently, is a technique as closely guarded as Colonel Sanders's 11 herbs and spices.



Boomwich's Buffalo à la Chicken Sandwich

\$10; 311 Atlantic Ave., nr. Smith St., Boerum Hill
718-643-9229

Boneless chunks of fried chicken practically infused with Frank's Red Hot sauce, a Neapolitan pizza's worth of fresh mozzarella, carrot-celery slaw, and ranch dressing on a long pretzel roll. Someone has finally successfully **crossed a chicken-parm hero with a basket of Buffalo wings**.

from frosting-thick yogurt to oozy moussaka. But the main attraction is the rotating selection of savory pies, stuffed with ingredients like leeks and kale or spiced lamb and best sampled in a lunch combo with a spoonful of Greek salad and a stuffed grape leaf. Pi is an offshoot of Astoria's illustrious Artopolis, a confectionery pedigree visible in the drawers and cake stands stocked with sticky baklava, deep-fried diples, and grape-must-flavored rings.

Kottu House

250 Broome St., nr. Orchard St.
646-781-9222

A type of griddled roti that's chopped into almost spaetzlelike pieces and stir-fried with eggs and spices, meat or seafood curry, and vegetables. Think fried rice without the rice and also about 100 times hotter, the super-absorbent flatbread soaking up all the incendiary flavor enhancers like a high-octane sponge. That's the Sri Lankan street-food specialty called kottu, and this is its lively, three-table, six-barstool Lower East Side house of pain. Each of the seven kottu varieties on offer, from Deviled Beef to Tofu Blast, is addictively spicy and unquestionably not safe for baby palates. By now, it's pretty generally agreed that there is no limit to what single-item-menu foodstuff a would-be fast-casual tycoon can attempt to build a restaurant concept around. Still, some choices are better than others, and this is a great one.

LoLo's Seafood Shack

303 W. 116th St., nr. Frederick Douglass Blvd.; 646-649-3356

A recent Douglas Rodriguez celeb-chef sighting in the back patio should come as no surprise: LoLo's chef-partner Raymond Mohan is a veteran of Rodriguez's Patria and Chicama. The Shack is a much more casual affair, a colorful, kitschy ode to Caribbean beach vacations, and the kind of food that fuels a hot night in the tropics. The signature dish isn't a dish at all but a knotted plastic bag swollen with your choice of shellfish and sauce. The shell-on shrimp are fresh and succulent, but anything swimming in Mohan's coconut curry would probably taste great. These "steampots" come with plastic gloves and a bib that reads "Time to Get Cracking." Isn't it always?

HACKS

CHEAP

Nº
1

EAT BREAKFAST



YOU KNOW HOW GOING OUT to lunch is often more enjoyable than going out to dinner: easier to get into the restaurant, mellower vibe, smaller check? Well, that goes double for breakfast. Here, five new and unusual morning meals worth setting the alarm for.

SAM Ramen

IVAN RAMEN SLURP SHOP

\$13 It's ramen. And breakfast. It's whole-wheat noodles in a fondue-like **double-dashi-Cheddar broth** with strips of **scallion omelette**, **griddled Taylor ham** (a.k.a. pork roll), and a dusting of **katsuobushi**. It's strange. It's wonderful. It beats oatmeal. 600 11th Ave., nr. 44th St.; 212-582-7942

Italian Breakfast Sandwiches

ALIDORO MIDTOWN

\$3.50 Unlike the Soho HQ, the roomy new midtown branch of the excellent Italian sandwich shop Alidoro is open weekdays for breakfast, and that means breakfast sandwiches. Basically, they're miniaturized and poached-egg-topped variations of sandwiches you find on the lunch menu, but served on cute little **brioche buns** instead of giant hero rolls. Our favorite is the **Carlo** (**porchetta**, **Piave cheese**, **poached egg**, and **hot-pepper spread**). Though, at \$3.50 a pop, you can try all four without breaking the Cheap Eats breakfast bank. 18 E. 39th St., nr. Madison Ave.; 646-692-4330

Ichiju Sansai Set Meal

OKONOMI

\$15 Okonomi's elegant take on the traditional Japanese morning meal includes a daily choice of

fish plus a **cube of omelette**, **pickles**, **vegetables**, **brown rice**, and **miso soup**. When people say that eating breakfast enhances brain function, reduces weight, perks you up, primes your metabolism, may prevent heart attacks, and generally adds to the enjoyment of life, it's likely they've just paid the check at Okonomi. 150 Ainslie St., nr. Lorimer St., Williamsburg; no phone

Carbonara Sunnyside Eggs

MARTA

\$15 At dinner, Nick Anderer turns a bowl of pasta alla carbonara into a pizza so good even Italian-food snobs like it. This is how he reinterprets the classic Roman dish for breakfast: two nicely **fried eggs** showered with **grated Pecorino** on top of a crisp **potato-and-guanciale hash**. 29 E. 29th St., nr. Madison Ave.; 212-651-3800

Avocado-Ice-Cream Toast

MORGENSTERN'S FINEST ICE CREAM

\$6.50 Sicilians get their gelati con brioche fixes not long after they roll out of bed; Lower East Siders have something even better: Nicholas Morgenstern's subtly flavored **avocado ice cream** spread like peanut butter onto a thick slab of **toasted Japanese milk bread** drizzled with **olive oil** and **condensed milk** and seasoned with pepper and sea salt. You may never skip breakfast again. 2 Rivington St., nr. Bowery; 212-209-7684

Nº
2

GO HALFSIES

SHARE A BIG, fatty sandwich, drink a mini-cocktail, or slurp down an off-the-menu half-portion of pasta—and save.

ALDER'S Shorts

We live in a craft-cocktail town where a \$14 tippie is about the norm, which is why we like Alder's "shorts"—smaller versions of some of the inventive drinks on the cocktail list at half the regular price. They're perfect for when

you just want to wet your whistle or test-drive something racy like **Dr. Dave's 'Scrip Pad** (rye, yuzu, amaro, smoked maple) before you commit. Or maybe you just want to try several drinks without falling off your barstool. \$7; 157 Second Ave., nr. 10th St.; 212-539-1900

TRICKS

Pinching pennies by getting up early, showing restraint, and eating your greens.

Nº 3 CREATE A VEGIVORE MENU FOR 2

THE CHALLENGE: Eating well—and inexpensively—at a restaurant where the multi-category menu tempts you to overorder and overspend. **THE SOLUTION:** Taking Michael Pollan's aphorism "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants" as inspiration, build a five-course DIY vegetable-focused tasting for two. The seasonal, Italian-inspired Vic's in Noho is the perfect place to cobble together a cheapavore meal. Here's your instruction manual.

1. The "**Mercato**" ("Market") section looks promising, with its implication of local-and-seasonal produce. Test that premise with the unusual but satisfying combo of "**beets, strawberries, black pepper, fennel, balsamic,**" and since you're sharing, why not order the English peas, too?

SUBTOTAL: \$17

2. The "**Antipasti**" section's asparagus sounds great, but the vegetable also appears at the bottom under "**Contorni**," an underrated, overlooked section and a cheap-eater's best friend. Get your asparagus fix from here instead and save a few bucks. And go for the Swiss chard, too, while you're at it.

SUBTOTAL: \$15

3. Skip the **entrées**. They might be delicious, but they'll blow the budget, and sampling more dishes is a better way to test a chef's chops.

4. Half-orders of **pasta** are usually perfectly adequate, especially when you're filling up on roughage. It's true that splitting one full order would be cheaper, but, according to our kitchen spies, restaurants usually give you more than half the amount of the regular portion, which is why they often charge more for half-orders. And sharing slippery pasta can be tricky. So get the **perciatelli with broccoli, anchovy, and chiles** and the very summery **vermicelli**.

SUBTOTAL: \$24



5. Have two glasses of the locally brewed draft beer, which, like the pastas, comes in half-portions.

SUBTOTAL: \$10

GRAND TOTAL: \$66

Vic's

DINNER

1. MERCATO

GARLIC BREAD, GOAT BUTTER	4
MARINATED CHICKPEAS, FARRO, FETA, PISTACHIOS	8
BEETS, STRAWBERRIES, BLACK PEPPER, FENNEL, BALSAMIC	9
ROASTED SUNCHOKES, GRILLED LEMONS, SAVORY, YOGURT	9
RADISHES, WHIPPED GOAT CHEESE, LEMON VERBENA	7
ENGLISH PEAS, POPPY SEEDS, LIME, RICOTTA SALATA	8

ANTIPASTO

CRISPY SWEET ONIONS, DRIED TOMATO, PARMIGIANO	13
MISTICANZA, GREENS, HERBS, LEMON	11
ASPARAGUS, ROMAINE, ANCHOVY, CHILIES, BREAD CRUMBS	13
BURRATA, CHARRED NETTLE PESTO TOAST, LEMON, WALNUTS, ROASTED MUSHROOMS	16
LAMB BELLY, CELERY PESTO, PISTACHIOS, ZUCCHINI	14
HEIRLOOM CARROTS, DILL, CAPERS, ROASTED SHALLOTS	10
CRISPY SOFT SHELL CRAB, BLACK OLIVE AIOI, LEMON, FRESH CHILIES, FENNEL POLLEN	17

ENTRÉE

ROASTED CHICKEN, SPRING ONIONS, FINGERLINGS, CHARRED BROCCOLI, CHILIES, BASIL	24
DAY BOAT SCALLOPS, RAPINI, CALABRIAN CHILIES, MARJORAM	29
POACHED COD, KALE, CANNELLINI BEANS, OLIVE, PISTACHIOS	26
PORCHETTA, SALSA VERDE, PICKLED ONIONS, RADISH	26
ARCTIC CHAR, ASPARAGUS, BROWN BUTTER, THYME, ALMONDS	25
GRILLED FLANK STEAK, ROMANO BEANS, HARISSA, CAPERS, GREEN OLIVES	27

3. LIVE

PIZZA

TOMATO, BASIL, YOUNG PECORINO	13
ANCHOVY, TOMATO, SPRING GARLIC, OREGANO	14
HOT PEPPERS, ONIONS, TOMATO, MOZZARELLA	15
SOPPRESSATA, CALABRIAN CHILIES, THYME	17

PASTA

MACCHERONI, TOMATO, GARLIC, PEPPERONCINI, PECORINO	12/19
CACIO E PEPE, BLACK PEPPER, PECORINO, PARMIGIANO	11/18
BORSA "LITTLE PURSE", RICOTTA, HAZELNUT, LEMON	12/19
VERMICELLI, GARLIC SCAPES, LEMON, CHILIES, PEA SHOOTS	12/19
PERCIATELLI, BROCCOLI, ANCHOVY, GARLIC, CHILIES, RICOTTA SALATA	12/19
OCCHI, CHICKEN LIVER, ROSEMARY, VIN COTTO, SWEET ONIONS	13/20

CONTORNI

SWISS CHARD, PECORINO	6
ROASTED ASPARAGUS, HORSE RADISH GREMOLATA	9
CRISPY YUKON GOLD POTATOES, LEMON	7



PERLA'S Bucatini Cacio e Pepe

The recently revamped menu includes five **first-rate pastas**, all available in half-size portions if you ask nicely. At \$9, the perfectly al dente bucatini cacio e pepe is a steal. 24 Minetta Ln., nr. Sixth Ave.; 212-933-1824

RIBALTA'S Spaghettoni al Pomodoro

Save room (and cash) for the **DOC margherita pizza** by ordering an off-menu primi portion of this unbelievably good **pasta**, made with pricey preserved tomatoes imported from the old country. \$12; 48 E. 12th St., nr. Broadway; 212-777-7781

HARRY & IDA'S Pastrami Sandwich

It's not as big as the one at the Carnegie, but it's cured and **smoked in-house**, served on a remarkably fresh and springy **club roll**, and crowned with **housemade pickles** and a corsage of dill. Plus it's available by the half-sandwich for \$8.50. 189 Ave. A, nr. 12th St.; 646-864-0967

SAIGUETTE'S Bánh Mì

Most Vietnamese sandwiches are dainty by hero standards. Not so Saiguettes, whose kitchen sandwich station must be run by a refugee from Defonte's. The **No. 39-F**, the "**grilled juicy boneless chicken thigh**," is almost something you'd bring to a Super Bowl party. Split one with a pal for \$4.50. 935 Columbus Ave., at 106th St.; 212-866-6888



Goa Taco's paratha tacos.

Goa Taco

79 Delancey St., nr. Allen St.
347-218-2918

If the last time you were enjoying a taco, you thought, *If only this tortilla were thicker, flakier, and much more buttery*, then Goa Taco is the place for you. Chef-owner Duvaldi Marneweck's contribution to the field: an Indian paratha griddled crisp, then folded around various multi-culti fillings. In classic fusion-food-mash-up form, Goa debuted at

Smorgasburg last summer and expanded to a cozily ramshackle pop-up on the Lower East Side, where Marneweck continues to extend his residency. On the strength of sensations like the paneer cheese with spinach pesto, fried chickpeas, and pickled tomatillos, we hope he remains permanently popped.

Neapolitan Express

232 E. 111th St., nr. Third Ave.
212-289-4689

Claims of ecosuperiority can make this nascent franchise—or “zero-emission Neapolitan pizzeria,” as corporate propaganda has it—seem like an ad for backer T. Boone Pickens, whose natural-gas empire powers its fleet of food trucks. But it's hard to quibble with the quality of the individual-size pies, each cooked in under 90 seconds in (here we go again!) “the only open-mouth electric oven built in Italy.” Forcella founder Giulio Adriani has trained the crew to carefully stretch the dough, apply the San Marzano tomatoes and fresh mozzarella, and

achieve a crisp and airy crust. Go for the A Diavolo, dotted with jalapeños and soppressata and drizzled with Mike's Hot Honey.

Manousheh

193 Bleecker St., nr. Macdougall St.
347-971-5778

Not, as it might first appear, yet another Village slice shop: This one's dedicated to the Lebanese flatbread typically eaten at breakfast. Thankfully, there is no time-of-day stricture imposed on the crisp, chewy versions baked here, which come minimally topped with za'atar, mild cheese, thick labne, ground beef, or vegetables and herbs. (You can even get it delivered, but pepperoni's not an option.) Note also the daily dessert specials, their honeyed, nutty sweetness cut by the house unfiltered Turkish coffee.

Empellon al Pastor

132 St. Marks Pl., at Ave. A
646-833-7039

Is New York a taco town yet? Have we achieved even a modicum of taco greatness? In spite of what the entire populace of Los Angeles would say, the answer is “yes,” with the latest evidence on display at Alex Stupak's combination tequila bar and tortilleria. What started off a little tentative has evolved into a taco tour de force. The housemade tortillas have gone from slightly flimsy to wonderfully supple. The headliner taco al pastor is an exemplary study in flavor and texture: crisp and fatty bits of pork neatly juxtaposed with sweet, cooling slivers of pineapple and three piquant salsas. Equally delicious are potato-and-chorizo tacos, beef tacos, and all the side dishes—especially black beans with pork scraps, and white beans flavored with the earthy Mayan spice blend black recado. We're a bean town now, too.

Goemon Curry

29 Kenmare St., at Elizabeth St.
212-966-0800

In a city enamored with Thai and Indian curries, the Japanese variety gets precious little love. The good folks at this sister establishment



NOT TOO LONG AGO, Thai-food fiends in search of fiery larbs and complex curries set out for Woodside's Sripraphai whenever a craving struck. But the nexus of nam prik has shifted to neighboring Elmhurst—home to Wat Buddha Thai Thavorn Vanaram, the 21-year-old temple around which the scene coalesces—thanks largely to an influx of delicious restaurants that cater to expats but welcome anyone with an appetite. CHRIS CROWLEY



1. Pata Paplean

(76-21 Woodside Ave.; 718-651-2076)

Started by four pals who wanted a place to hang out, this watering hole purports to be the city's first Thai bar. Go for the **weekend-only noodles**: stewed pork belly, pork-blood-enriched num tok, and an uncompromisingly sour tom yum packed with pork and fish balls (\$4).



2. Khao Kang

(76-20 Woodside Ave.; 718-662-8721)

Modeled after and named for Thailand's rice-and-curry spots, this cafeteria-style joint provides no menu. Searing and **sour curries** are doled out from the colorful steam table and change daily—your only choice is whether you want two or three with your rice (\$7.50 to \$7.95).



3. Ayada

(77-08 Woodside Ave.; 718-424-0844)

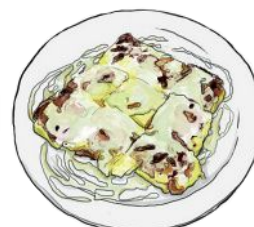
Long considered a destination for curries, whether sour, Penang, or jungle, this standby also offers noteworthy beef-tendon soup and Chinese-style stir-fry. You'll want to pay special attention to northern dishes like **e-sarn sausage** (\$8) and the green-mango and papaya salads.



4. Paet Rio

(81-10 Broadway; 917-832-6672)

After nearly two decades of serving watered-down crowd-pleasers at Manhattan's multiple Wondee Siams, Phimplo Likitsansook branched out to Queens last August with exotica like **khanom chin nam-ngiao**, fermented rice noodles in a thick tomato-and-pork sauce (\$11).



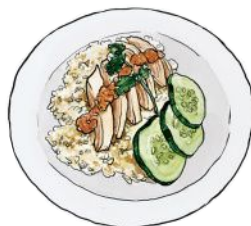
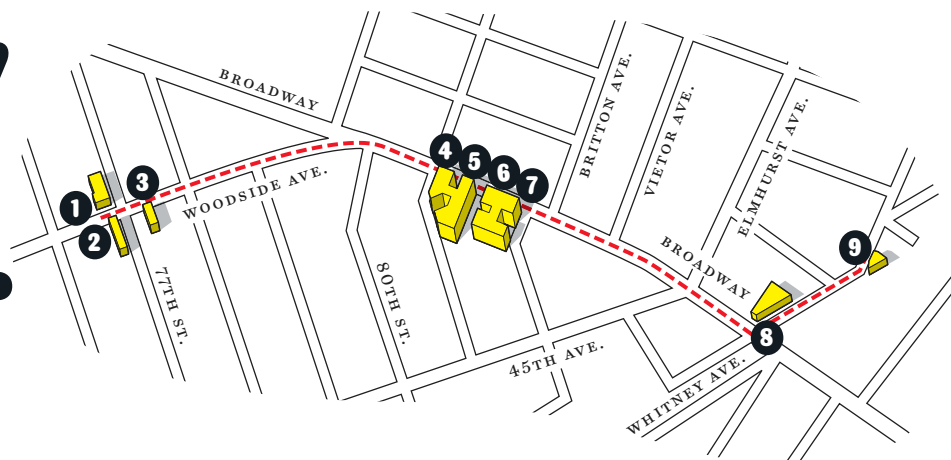
5. Sugar Club

(81-18 Broadway; 718-565-9018)

Three years after assuming ownership, Chirawat Withanattana moved his Thai deli and dessert store into bigger digs with more room for imported snacks, savory home-style dishes, and a few stools for enjoying made-to-order sweets like **banana-egg roti** (\$4).

CLUSTER VERY HOT SPOT

A guide to **ELMHURST's** booming Thai scene.



6. Eim Khao Mun Kai

(81-32 Broadway; 718-424-7156)

This specialist deals in **khao man gai**, the Thai-street-food riff on Hainanese chicken and rice (\$9). The rice is simmered in the chicken's cooking liquid and best with the house hot sauce swirled in, but it's the lip-smacking, ginger-perfumed broth you'll want to come back for.



7. Ploy

(81-40 Broadway; 718-205-7298)

This small corner spot serves dishes from Thailand's north and south, including the dry southern curry kua kling, the street snack miang ka na (pork, chiles, peanuts, and rind-on lime you fold up in lettuce), and exemplary pan-fried noodles like **pad kee mao** (\$8 to \$10).



8. Chao Thai

(85-03 Whitney Ave., nr. Broadway; 718-424-4999)

The cooking still packs a serious punch at this nine-year-old hole-in-the-wall, where a special emphasis is given to the dishes of the north, like **yum pla duk fu**, a particularly delicious salad of young mango and fried ground catfish (\$13). Plus: fantastic pan-fried noodles.



9. Plant Love House

(86-08 Whitney Ave., nr. Macnish St.; 718-565-2010)

Bangkok native Manadsanan Sutipayakul serves dishes ("Anything we love") from across the country. But the place has gained a reputation for its **num tok**, a deep, brooding pork-blood soup replete with noodles and plenty of pork (\$8).



Raclette's sardine tartine.

of soba specialist Cocoron next door aim to right this wrong with a menu devoted to Sapporo-style yakusen soup curry, infused almost medicinally with “detoxifying” herbs, and the thicker, velvety-textured roux-style curry with rice. Both are complexly flavored and deceptively filling, especially if you go crazy with add-ons like skewered chicken katsu and poached eggs. And watch for specials like Okinawa taco rice, a Tex-Mex vestige of '60s-era American servicemen stationed overseas and craving a taste of home.

Raclette

195 Ave. A, nr. 12th St.; 917-853-5377

The namesake dish is a glorious mound of melted cheese scraped off the wheel and onto a platter of potatoes, cured meat, and hunk of baguette, and it will gird you against any brisk winter winds gusting off the East River. Even in clement weather, the kitchen does right by elegant and eclectic open- and close-faced sandwiches, be they constructed of briny sardines

and ribbons of fennel; pinwheels of prosciutto with figs and hazelnuts; or even a buttery ooze of fromage blanc, dark chocolate, and strawberry-tarragon jam.

Arepa Lady

77-02 Roosevelt Ave., Jackson Heights
347-730-6124

The actual “arepa lady,” Maria Piedad Cano, continues to ply her street-cart trade a few blocks away, but her sons (the arepa gentle-

men?) have anchored the family tradition by giving her ephemeral creations a permanent home. After a recent renovation, the snug space accommodates (slightly) larger groups, all drawn by the allure of Colombian corn cakes, plus amenities like plates and tropical juices. The sweet, pillowy arepa de queso (lush with melted mozzarella) and the intensely corny arepa de choclo are crowd-pleasers, but don't underestimate the arepa relleña: Stiffer and less sweet, it's a sturdy vehicle for fillings like chicharrón and chorizo.

Hard Times Sundaes

5700 Ave. U, nr. E. 58th St.,
Mill Basin; no phone

A permanently parked burger truck in a southeastern Brooklyn strip-mall parking lot that's worth the trip? It's next to an inlet that isn't quite the Maine seacoast but still feels as scenic and outdoorsy as it gets within spitting distance of the Belt Parkway. There's even a picnic table. Why you really should go? Because Andrew Zurica's four-ounce smash burgers are hard-seared, crisp-edged, and incredibly cohesive. And while they seem super-simple, each detail and every ingredient has been as carefully considered as a DB Burger. Chief among these ingredients is grease—the secret weapon of a worn-in flattop that imparts to each new raw patty the deep, delectable flavor of burgers past. Terrific deep-fried bacon-wrapped chili dogs, too.

Souk & Sandwich

117 Sixth Ave., at Watts St.
212-625-3982

This long, narrow establishment is all kitchen, save for the small vestibule where you place your order. But the Lebanese spreads, salads, sandwiches, and stews that emerge from that space belie the makeshift fast-food setup. Beyond the familiar falafel and hummus, you'll find relative rarities, like sandwiches stuffed with veal tongue, liver and onions, and mashed spiced cod. Best of all might be the betenjan mashwi, a streamlined, minimalist construction of marinated eggplant rolled up in thin, chewy flatbread and charred on the grill.

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CHEAP EATS

Arcade Bakery

220 Church St., nr. Worth St.
212-227-7895

Sure, the novelty of the semi-secret location at the end of a formerly closed-off office-building lobby is part of the appeal. And so is the nifty renovation of what used to be glass-enclosed ad-display alcoves into mahogany-paneled seating cubbies with drop-down tables. But none of that trumps Roger Gural's flaky croissants, pear-vanilla baguettes, and whiskey-pecan babka. The lunchtime-only pizza made from baguette dough is pretty amazing, too. And bonus points for a stubborn, old-fashioned determination to keep production low and turnover high, which is why you won't find Gural's handiwork at your local coffee bar, and why everything's always exceedingly fresh.

Cabalito

13 Essex St., nr. Hester St.
No phone

The stuffed Salvadoran masa pucks called pupusas can be found in Latino enclaves throughout the boroughs, but made their move into mainstream foodie culture via Red Hook Ball Fields vendor Pupusas. Now lower Manhattan has its own dedicated pupuseria, a tiny shop where toothpick flags inserted into the corn cakes indicate their fillings, which include, among other things, chicken; beef; the Central American flower bud named loroco; and revueltas, a traditional mix of mozzarella, refried beans, and chicharrones. Your pupusa arrives piping hot and way too sturdy to submit to plastic cutlery, so do as the pros do—top it with salsa and the fermented-cabbage salad curtido, and use your hands.

Morris Sandwich Shop

569 Lincoln Pl., nr. Franklin Ave.,
Crown Heights; 718-398-2145

This takeout sandwich shop, the love child of the owners'

Morris grilled-cheese truck and the original sandwich-focused incarnation of their Crown Heights restaurant Gladys, isn't shy about touting its suppliers—Landaff Creamery, Brooklyn Cured, Orwasher's Bakery, and Queens County Farm among them. Still, a sandwich is only as good as the sum of its parts, and the kitchen designs and constructs as well as it sources. The Pollos Hermanos is chicken salad Buffalo'd with Point Reyes blue, slices of celery, and hot-sauce mayo. The gently pressed European Combo is like an outside Italian hero crossed with a cucumber sandwich: It delivers the salty cured-meat wallop of the former while maintaining the pinky-raising neatness of the latter. And the classic grilled cheese is as delicious served under a brick-and-mortar roof as it is from the side of a truck.

Kiki's

130 Division St., nr. Orchard St.
646-882-7052

The sign outside is written in Chinese, but the guy at the door greets you with three words: "Traditional Greek cooking." This, you learn, is Kiki's. Kiki is from Poughkeepsie, but her father is Greek. She used to tend bar down the block at Forgtmenot (no "e" after the "g"). Now she and some of Forgtmenot's Greek-American crew run Kiki's together. The menu, in English, not Chinese, settles any lingering doubts. So does the cooking, a lot of it done by Rita, a.k.a. Auntie, a family friend of one of the partners. Nothing much you haven't tasted before: tzatziki, saganaki, zucchini chips, grilled octopus, fries with oregano and feta, whole fish, mous-saka, pastitsio, and a "traditional-no-lettuce" Greek salad. Then why can't you stop eating it all and ordering more? Maybe it's the thrill of discovering Greek-grandma cooking in a neighborhood where you don't expect to find it. Maybe it's the vibe—more hipster watering hole than Greek Astoria estiatorio. Probably it's because the food is so simple and delicious.

Rose's Bar & Grill

295 Flatbush Ave., nr. Prospect Pl.,
Prospect Heights; 718-230-0427

"People really want cheap food," says Francine Stephens, co-owner with her husband, chef Andrew Feinberg, of this down-scaled incarnation of the space that once was Marco's, and before that, the original Franny's. It's a logical conclusion to draw—especially in the shadow of Barclays Center with its game-night hordes, and new neighbors like Shake Shack and Doughnut Plant appealing to our baser instincts. So now, where there were Coravin-pierced prestige wines and wood-grilled lamb chops, there are cans of Bud, \$8.50 cocktails, and snacky, unpretentious bar food, including a burger and fries. But old habits die hard. There may be no written attribution of sourcing and pedigree—there isn't even a printed menu—but said burger is made from grass-fed beef and perfumed with smoke from the wood grill, and the sharp and funky cheese on the excellent ham and cheese toast comes from the couple's gourmet grocery, Bklyn Larder, down the street. The ham, by the way, is housemade, and absolutely killer.

Old Tbilisi Garden

174 Bleecker St., nr. Sullivan St.
212-470-6064

Georgians, as we've noted in these pages before, are as chauvinistic about their ancient cuisine as any Italian or French gastronome, and this Greenwich Village restaurant, named for the country's largest city, offers evidence to support the bias. If it's your first time, you want the imeruli salad (like a feta-less Greek but with a wonderfully creamy-tangy walnut-purée dressing). You want the khinkali (a plate of overgrown soup dumplings neatly pleated like old-fashioned ice packs and filled with meat and broth). And you want the adjaruli khachapuri (essentially a baked-to-order bread canoe, its hull overflowing with melted, mildly sour sulguni cheese and a raw egg yolk for stirring in). Then you want a 48-hour nap.

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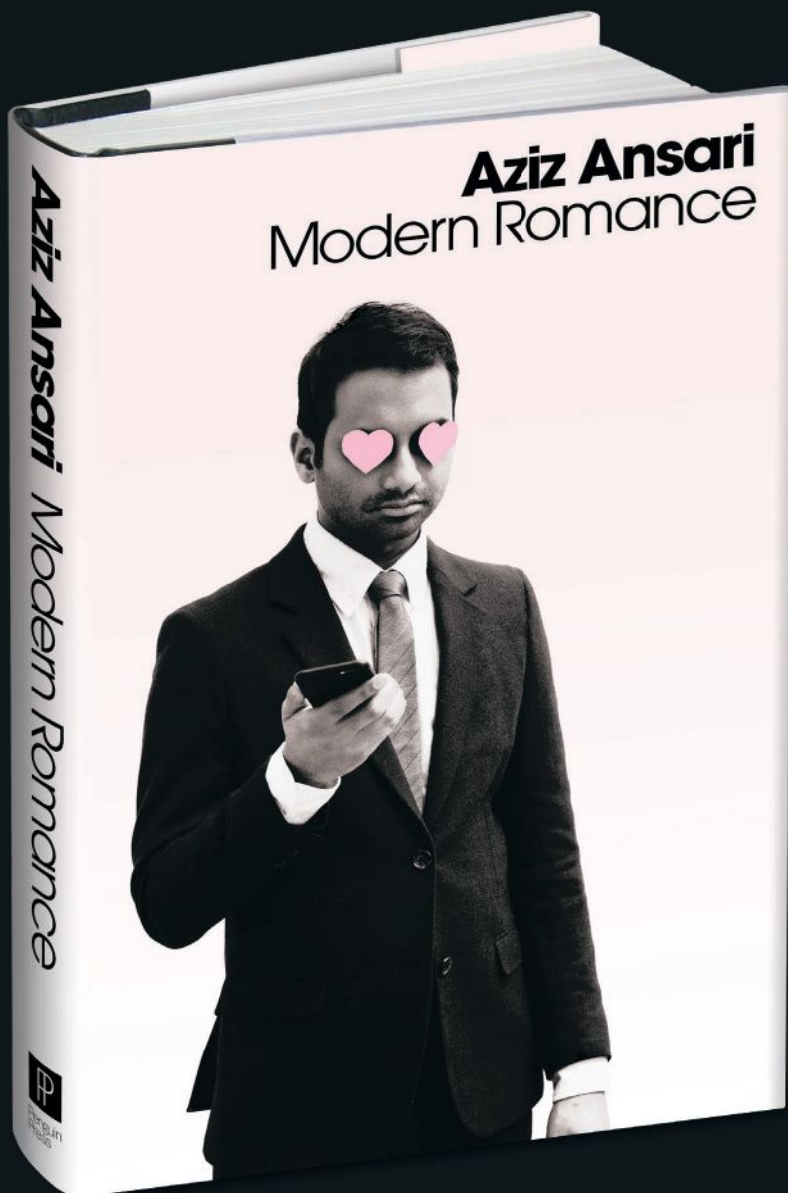
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TRUE DETECTIVE FROM ABOVE / THE MOST EXPENSIVE PICASSO / JAMES LECESNE'S MANY FACES / PARTIES / CRITICS / TO DO

The CULTURE PAGES

Lady Gaga Goes to the Middle

The woman who made pop weird is now playing around with being normal. Or her version of it.

BY LINDSAY ZOLADZ



LT'S LATE JUNE at Radio City Music Hall, and Lady Gaga is playing a joke on Tony Bennett, or maybe—it's always a little hard to tell with her—Lady Gaga is playing a joke on us. This is the third of four nights that the unlikely-yet-somehow-inevitable May-December pair have sold out and the latest stop on their "Cheek to Cheek" tour, which runs into early August and follows their chart-topping 2014 album of jazz standards. Gaga has just finished an explosive, gusty, and gloriously butch rendition of the old Cher hit "Bang Bang (My Baby Shot Me Down)." Her look: ruby-red stilettos, punky print T-shirt, well-tailored jacket and pants. It's her first official showstopper of the night. Showcasing her growly lower register, her version of the song has a feeling of aggression rather than resignation—the way she sings it, you'd swear she was the one holding the gun. The crowd applauds. She leans toward us conspiratorially. "Don't tell Tony," she says with that signature New York-theater-kid affect, "but this is his suit."

This is also, largely, his crowd. The scene in the Hall's plush lobby is quite different from the one I remember from the last time I saw Gaga live, almost exactly a year prior, when her blaring, vaguely under-the-sea-themed "artRAVE" tour stopped at Madison Square Garden. There, freak flags were flying, but tonight, everything's much more subdued. Expensively dressed and aggressively hetero men tote around dolled-up dates; grandparents abound; the woman in front of me at the bar asks for ice in her white wine. I spot a few unmistakable Little Monsters, but even they seem to have classed it up for the occasion: A man walks by in a beaded, floor-length evening gown. I try to decide if it's a mark of her changing cultural significance or my own slow-but-steady maturity that this is the first Lady Gaga concert to which I have not worn a wig.

So, again, not exactly her crowd—which means, of course, that it's hers to win over.

And she does, with ease. I hear it murmured a row back after "Bang Bang," and I will hear this particular sentiment at least a dozen times tonight, and I have heard it said incessantly over the past few months: "Wow, I had no idea that Lady Gaga can really sing."

This phrase seemed to be on everybody's lips in February when, with 36 million people watching, the artist formerly known as Stefani Germanotta belted out a stunning, triumphant, and technically impressive Academy Award telecast tribute to *The Sound of Music*. As a beaming Julie Andrews hugged her in appreciation after she'd finished singing, you knew you'd just witnessed one of those universally respected, generation-uniting musical moments that we so rarely get in this era of Twitter-sniping—for one peaceful evening, everybody seemed to be bowing down to Gaga. ("Congratulations to Lady Gaga and Julie Andrews for a most emotional

moment on this year's Oscars," Steve Martin tweeted. "Oops, forgot to be satirical.") Since we must now predict the long-term cultural significance of a televised event before we've even broken for commercial, pundits had declared the performance an irrefutable turning point in Lady Gaga's career by the time the Best Picture envelope was ripped open. Quoth BuzzFeed at 11:41 that night: "Her *Sound of Music* medley at the Oscars showed that she's left behind her days of perishable dresses and #ArtPop performances once and for all."

Did it, though? That was the question on my mind at Radio City, and leading up to the tour all signs have pointed to yes—Gaga seems to be running with this "Damn, she

Must she give up those attention-grabbing spectacles once and for all in order for us to take her seriously as a "real" artist?

really can sing" thing. Her latest video to make the rounds online is not one of, say, a performance artist vomiting on her (March 13, 2014) or a demonstration of "Volantis, the World's First Flying Dress" (November 11, 2013) but ... a clip of her singing "La Vie en Rose" in a pink dress at the Hollywood Bowl. I'm sure plenty are happy to see her so-called gimmicks fall by the wayside, and I have to admit there's something thrilling about watching one of the biggest pop stars of the past decade make such a sudden artistic pivot. But must she give up those attention-grabbing spectacles once and for all in order for us to take her seriously as a "real" artist? Perhaps a little selfishly, I'm worried about what might happen if Gaga goes fully normal. After all, we're talking

about the woman who, bless her heart, rescued us all from normal in the first place.

GIVEN THE STAGGERING progress we've made lately with gay rights and the attention paid to transgender issues, it is perhaps inconvenient for us as a culture to remember how many people, less than a decade ago, truly believed that Lady Gaga had a dick.

The rumor began around 2009, when Gaga's debut album, *The Fame*, was still riding high on the charts, thanks to the fun-but-faceless sleeper hit "Just Dance" and the undeniable, star-making smash "Poker Face." Nobody knew quite what to make of her back then, this woman who made conventional-sounding electro-pop but walked, talked, and dressed like an alien visitor from a planet on which everybody is a descendant of Klaus Nomi. When it came to female pop stars, we were still reeling from the Britney-Christina-Jessica era, during which the only acceptable kind of femininity that presented itself was au naturel—eternally sun-kissed and low-cut-jean ready and never having anything too weird or opinionated to say. In this world, Gaga's take on femininity—all boxy silhouettes, cyborgian dance moves, and grand, Warholian pronouncements—was, to many, utterly illegible. "I'm not going to make a guy drool the way a Britney video does," she said in an early interview. "[W]hat I do is so extreme. It's meant to make guys think: *I don't know if this is sexy or just weird.*"

Gaga was something different and less explicitly "hot" than the female pop stars who had come before her. So naturally the internet responded by creating an elaborate conspiracy theory about her genitals. A video purporting to show something unidentifiable in her leotard went viral; for the better part of two years, websites like Gawker made a sport of enlarging concert photographs of her crotch. (A sample entry from the site's extensive "lady gaga penis"—search archive: "Lady Gaga's Vagina Almost Fooled Us Into Forgetting About Her Penis.")

In hindsight, this might end up looking like pop culture's last major moment of gay-and-trans panic. The early and mid-aughts, remember, were a woefully conservative time in pop music when it came to sexual identity and gender presentation. Lance Bass couldn't come out for fear of alienating his fan base; any speculation that Britney "wasn't a real woman" would have called her greatest value, her male-gaze-approved hotness, into question. So what was exhilaratingly radical to me about Gaga at the time was that this kind of speculation

(Continued on page 96)

PREVIOUS PAGE: ACE/INF PHOTO/SPASH NEWS; OPPOSITE PAGE: FELIPE RANALES/SPASH NEWS (MAY 10, MAY 12, JUNE 19); RAYMOND HALL/GETTY IMAGES (JUNE 16); SPASH NEWS (JUNE 21, JUNE 22, BLACK SUIT); XACTPIX/SPASH NEWS (JUNE 23); ACE/INFPHOTO.COM/SPASH NEWS (PINK SUIT)

No More Meat
Dresses:
Gaga's
Latest
Looks



MAY 10, 2015



MAY 12, 2015



JUNE 18, 2015



JUNE 19, 2015



JUNE 21, 2015



JUNE 22, 2015



JUNE 23, 2015



JUNE 25, 2015



JUNE 25, 2015

The Most Expensive Picasso Ever Auctioned

The 60-year journey from canvas to Christie's of *Les Femmes d'Alger (Version "O")*.

BY NATE FREEMAN



IN MAY, PABLO PICASSO'S 1955 painting *Les Femmes d'Alger (Version "O")* was snapped up at Christie's for \$179 million, setting a record for the most expensive artwork ever sold at auction. Naturally, the headlines focused on the sheer magnitude of the sale, which broke the old auction record of \$142 million—the cost of Francis Bacon's *Three Studies of Lucian Freud*. The painting itself, though, has a story to tell beyond its price.

1.

THE INSPIRATION

Delacroix's Les Femmes d'Alger.



Les Femmes d'Alger (Version "O") was **born out of a rivalry between Picasso and Henri Matisse**. But competition can evolve into adoration, and when Matisse died on November 3, 1954, Picasso embarked upon an ambitious form of mourning: He would make a series of 15 works in homage to Eugène Delacroix's 1834 painting *Les Femmes d'Alger*, a work held in near-religious regard by the late artist.

2.

THE MODEL

Qui est la femme?

Picasso's mistress **Jacqueline Roque** is widely believed to be the archetype for the woman looking out from the canvas.



3.

THE CREATION

From the series' start to the gallery's wall.



DECEMBER 13, 1954

Picasso begins the series, 40 days after Matisse passes away.

DECEMBER 31, 1954

The artist has completed two canvases and a drawing.

JANUARY 31, 1955

Ten canvases are completed.

FEBRUARY 6, 1955

The 11th of 15 is finished.

FEBRUARY 9, 1955

The 12th is done.

FEBRUARY 14, 1955

On Valentine's Day, Picasso completes *Les Femmes d'Alger (Version "O")*. He keeps the painting for a few days before giving it to his dealer, **Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler**.



4.

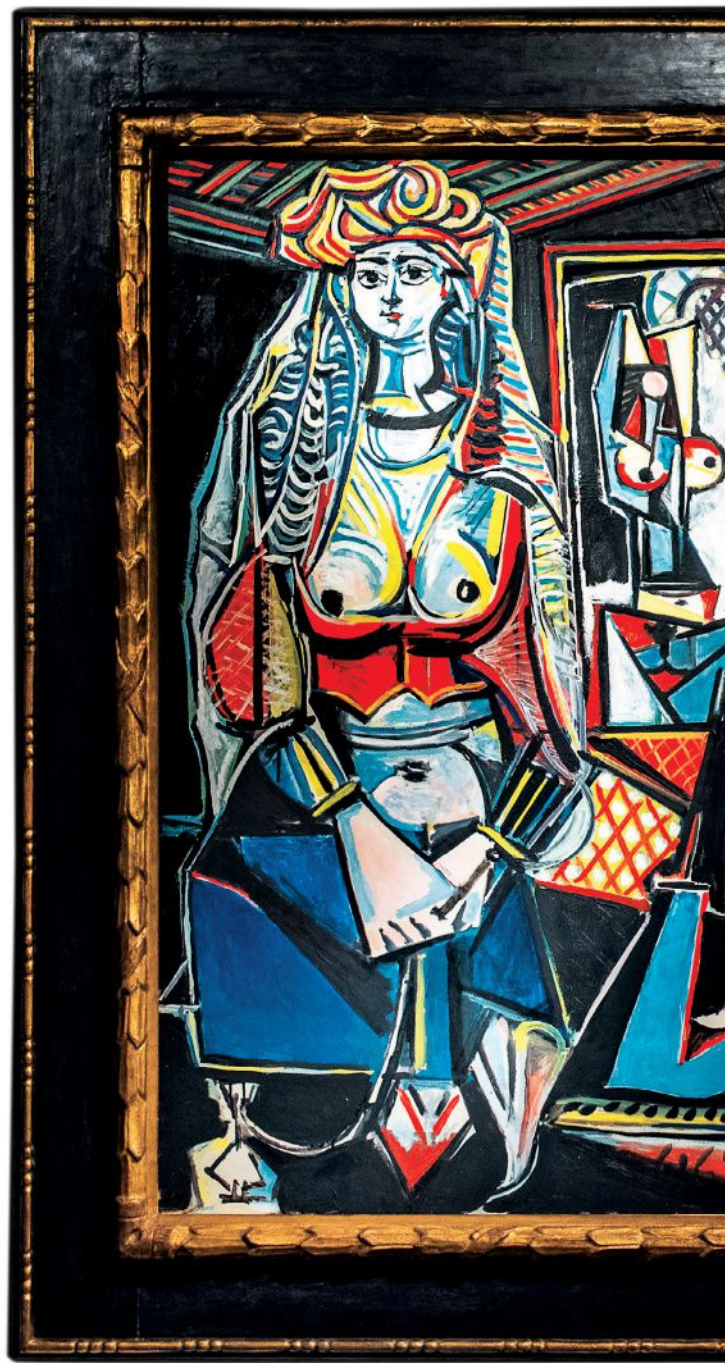
THE OWNERS

Everyone who has bought Version "O."

ON DISPLAY

The painting's first move into private hands.

Kahnweiler was a friend of Picasso's whose Galerie Kahnweiler (renamed Galerie Louise Leiris in 1940) was responsible for selling works by the likes of Braque, Léger, and Gris as well as Picasso. **In 1955, though, Picasso was not selling particularly well. It took a 1960 retrospective at the Tate in London to send his prices skyrocketing—even then, the most expensive works would go for \$50,000, or about \$400,000 in today's dollars.**



\$179 million



5.

WHERE IT RANKS

The five most expensive artworks.



\$300 M
2015



\$263 M
2011

\$179 M
2015



\$164 M
2006



\$162 M
2006

Paul
Gauguin
**Nafea Faa
Ipoipo?**

Paul
Cézanne
**The Card
Players**

Pablo
Picasso
**Version
"O"**

Jackson
Pollock
**No. 5,
1948**

Willem
de
Kooning
Woman III

6.

IS IT WORTH THE PRICE?

Artistically speaking, that is.

Whether any piece of art is "worth" such an exorbitant price is a question primarily for economists, but what about the painting's quality? Of the 15 canvases, *Version "O"* is the most fully realized of the series, and certainly the most desirable Picasso canvas not in a public collection or, prior to its sale, already stashed away in a billionaire's vault. Loic Gouzer, the Christie's director who curated the special auction that featured the sale, says that "*Les Femmes d'Alger* is **one of those effortless masterpieces** that Picasso did in the second part of his career." But Picasso's friend and biographer John Richardson **doesn't place it "in the first 100 of Picasso's best paintings."**

THE GANZES

Owners from 1956 to 1997

Victor and Sally Ganz were a low-key Manhattan couple who accumulated one of the country's best collections of 20th-century art. One day in the 1950s, Victor, who owned a costume-jewelry company, and Sally—a perfume seller at Bonwit Teller—popped into the Paul Rosenberg Gallery on 57th Street and saw a Picasso called *The Dream*. They loved it and **bought it for \$7,000**. In June 1956, Kahnweiler came to them with a deal: **the entire *Les Femmes d'Alger* series for \$212,500**.

THE ANONYMOUS SECOND BUYER

Owner from 1997 to 2015.

After 50 years of collecting and a decade after the death of her husband, Sally Ganz decided to sell off part of her collection at Christie's. *The Dream* was the 1997 event's biggest single sale, going for \$48.4 million. Not far behind was *Les Femmes d'Alger (Version "O")*, which went for **\$31.9 million** to London-based dealer Libby Howie. But she wasn't buying for herself—the actual purchaser remained anonymous. The *Independent* speculated that "Howie is believed to act as agent for a Middle Eastern potentate."

THE RECORD SALE

List price: **\$140 million**.



On May 11, a client represented by Christie's Brett Gorvy secured the painting. The auction house wouldn't reveal the buyer's identity, but a "Page Six" item pointed to **Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber Al Thani**, the former prime minister of Qatar.

The Al Thani family is one of the art world's most acquisition-hungry forces: As the head of the Qatari Museums Authority, Al Thani's daughter has paid more than \$70 million for a Rothko and \$250 million for a Cézanne.

Other Things Al Thani Has Bought in New York

\$90 million The East 64th Street Wildenstein & Company headquarters (sale pending)
\$47 million An Upper East Side townhouse
\$35 million A mansion at 21 Beekman Place



TV

Looking Down at 'True Detective'

The changing—and divisive—nature of the aerial shot.

BY ADAM STERNBERGH

IF YOU'VE BEEN watching the second season of HBO's *True Detective*, you've probably noticed how much time is spent in the sky. Not by the characters but by the camera—gliding over industrial barrens, hovering above traffic on California's arterial tangles of highway. The diamond interchange that serves as the backdrop for the show's title card—a photo by David Maisel—may be the season's central image, in cold contrast to the lone tree of season one. Lizzie O'Leary of "Marketplace" even suggested a *True Detective* drinking game on Twitter: "Do a shot every time there's a highway aerial. Surprise! You're dead!"

"The aerials were written into the scripts from day one," show creator Nic Pizzolatto says via email. "The idea was to highlight scale and connectivity; the big picture that informs these little lives." Unlike season one,

the current *True Detective* features multiple directors, so much of the responsibility for the visual style falls on the show's director of photography, Nigel Bluck. He decided that, rather than a typical altitude of 200 to 500 feet, he would shoot from 1,000 feet—in part to amplify the abstract nature of the landscape, and in part because "we wanted a point of view that belongs to something bigger than us."

Aerial shots have been a Hollywood staple since the beginning of the film industry: first via airplanes, then with the more versatile helicopter. There's some debate over the first helicopter shot, though the film critic Nick Pinkerton traces it to Nicholas Ray's 1948 film *They Live by Night*. In his recent consideration in *Film Comment*, Pinkerton writes, "The helicopter shot is, today, ubiquitous" and "a rank cliché." When Hitchcock panned



a cityscape in the opening shot of 1960's *Psycho*, he was able to evoke a sense that evil lurked behind every half-pulled window shade. Soon, however, the hovering-copter shot became standard in every big-budget film; think of all the movies that start with a camera swooping over a city skyline. But, as Pinkerton writes, "I have not given up hope that the helicopter aerial shot may yet do new, great things for cinema."

That day may have arrived. Aerial shots are much more accessible and versatile now, thanks to drones. The FAA cleared private drones for commercial use this past September, and they're cheaper than helicopters, costing roughly \$5,000 a day rather than the latter's \$15,000-to-\$20,000 day rate.

Aesthetically, too, the aerial shot is transforming. Post-9/11 and post-NSA, the aerial imparts a new kind of unease, a more ambi-

ent dread. This new take is employed ingeniously by, for example, Christopher Nolan in 2008's *The Dark Knight*, which opens on the Gotham cityscape over the sound of a ticking clock before we see a skyscraper window explode. What was once the filmmaker's version of air supremacy now conveys pervasive vulnerability.

This, in part, informs the use of aerials in *True Detective*—as Bluck says, "There's a sense of menace they can impose." In this case, the menace comes from the landscape itself—the endless roadways that seem to promise progress but deliver its opposite. "With the freeways, you're free to choose a direction but not free to choose your choices," Pizzolatto explains, then adds, "But if that's all nonsense, and it might be, I think they're just interesting transitional shots." ■

Nine Characters in the Face of an Author

James Lecesne demonstrates how to become a nine-piece ensemble.

BY BORIS KACHKA



IN ADAPTING his YA novel *Absolute Brightness*—a tale, full of funny, familiar residents of a small Jersey town, about the disappearance of a flamboyant, apparently gay teen—for the stage, James Lecesne jettisoned some characters and added others. “It has to be varied, to keep people’s interest for 75 minutes,” he explains. “You can’t have too many people in the hair salon, right?” Then came voices and gestures “to encourage people to think about the uniqueness of each human being.” The accents and movements that distinguish detective from hairdresser from mob wife come from all corners of his life: his Hasbrouck Heights youth, summers at the shore, a stint in a play full of German characters. “I hear them speaking,” he says, “and then I work back.” (*The Absolute Brightness of Leonard Pelkey* opens at the Westside Theatre on July 11.)



GLORIA SALZANO

“She’s the widow of a mobster—she’s seen a lot of evil. There’s a pursed thing to her mouth, as if she doesn’t want the wrong thing to slip out. She’s lonely, and the binoculars indicate her desire to look outside her life. Her eyes are very wide, and for me that’s the thing about her. I grew up with those women—intuitively smart but intellectually not so much.”



CHUCK DESANTIS

“He’s a small-town detective, one alter ego. Chuck’s center of gravity tends to be forward, but his is. And very matter-of-fact, so presentation. He doesn’t use



BUDDY HOWARD

“He is the leader of the Buddy Howard School of Drama and Dance. He has a posh accent but also a strange, distinctive lisp. So it would be hard to imagine him as a successful actor at home in England, but in New Jersey, he’s found a way. He’s filled with florid physical gestures. Everyone assumes he’s gay, but then he introduces his wife. That’s just his affect.”



TRAVIS LEMBECK

“He’s 19; he’s troubled. He’s playing a video game, and he has longish hair, so he has a tic of whipping it out of his eyes. He tends to talk out of the side of his mouth—a physical manifestation of never telling the exact truth. When he’s standing, he has his hands in his back pockets, like having something behind your back, a secret.”



MARTY BRANAHAN

“Chuck’s cop partner. So New guy that I knew well growing up, allows me to give the impression to take up as much space as flail with his arms, and his head is

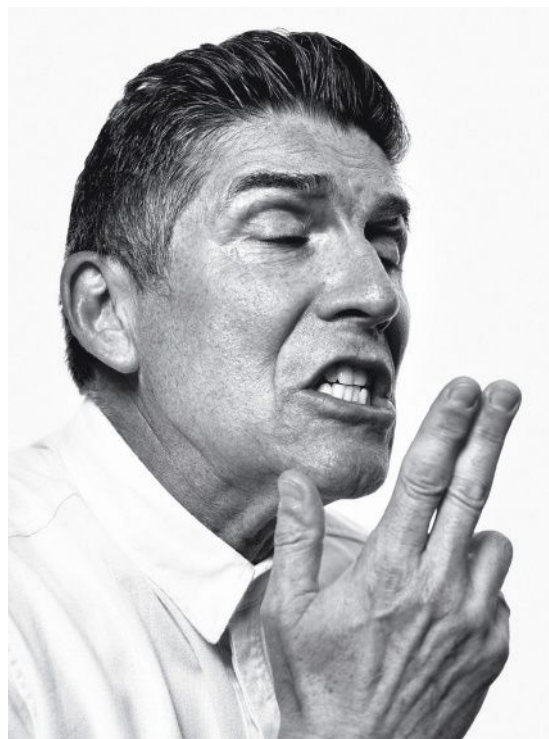
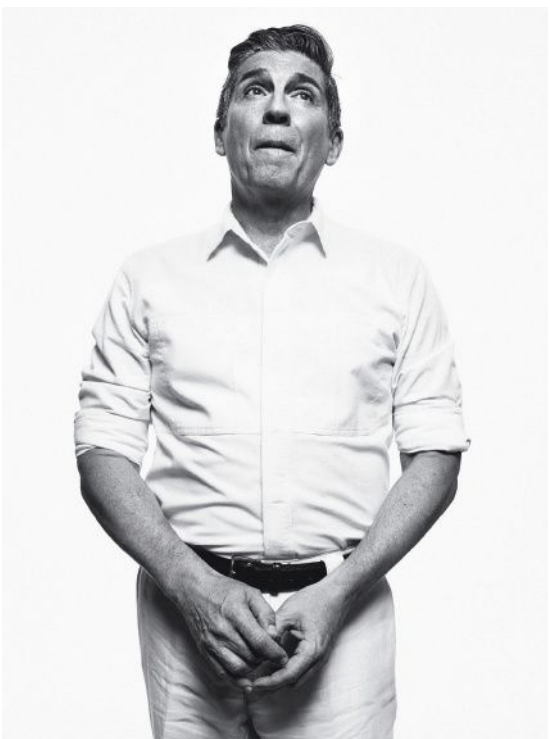


ELLEN HERTLE

"Early 40s. She runs the local beauty salon, a small-town Liz Taylor, with something messy about her. I get up on my toes, my way of being in heels—a little unstable. Something I learned from a Kabuki performer who plays women: A woman's hips are wider than her shoulders, so as a man, you present hips forward, torso slightly tilted to one side."

OTTO BECKERMAN

"German, early 70s; he runs the local clock shop. I did [Doug Wright's] *I Am My Own Wife*, which has 37 characters, more than half German, but I've never had a dialect coach—I'm sure it's all wrong. He's probably six inches shorter than I am, almost like he's weighed down by his past. He has a tremor in one hand, which is how I stay in touch with him."



PHOEBE HERTLE

"She's 16—a really smart teenager faced with an adult problem. She's incredibly self-conscious, yet she wants to be seen, so she's fighting this desire to hide. She has an inner motor that is acting against these exterior gestures of, basically, 'Oh my God, my hair, my socks.' She's always pulling at her socks. Her gestures are literally close to the vest."

MARION TOCHTERMAN

"She's in her late 60s, lifelong smoker, probably had her heyday back in the '80s. There's a trick to doing her rasp so that you don't destroy your voice, mostly in my facial mask. So much of Marion happens in the lower part of her face. Repositioning my jaw, pushing it a little forward, that creates her kind of old-lady neck."

Jersey—a brash kind of working. He has a very wide stance, which of somebody much larger—I try possible. He has a tendency to a little loose on his shoulders."

PARTY LINES

Edited by Jennifer Vineyard

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TANGENT

"First off, I loved The Apprentice and I'm sad to see it go. But I could never give Donald [Trump] any advice until I make \$9 billion. Donald, you're nutty, and I love you. We both made a career out of saying inappropriate stuff. Do what you do, and you'll stay on top. But do us all a favor and shave your head, because it's just bad."
—Lisa Lampanelli

PREMIERE OF ANT-MAN

DOLBY THEATRE, HOLLYWOOD. JUNE 29.

"They make you take a test and go through an obstacle course. You have to fight off henchmen."
—Adam McKay, on how to get hired by Marvel



VOICES FOR THE VOICELESS: STARS FOR FOSTER KIDS
ST. JAMES THEATRE. JUNE 29.

PHOTOGRAPHS: CHARLEY GALLAY/GETTY IMAGES/COURTESY OF DISNEY (ANT-MAN PREMIERE)

Who will make the list of 2016 Five Star Wealth Managers?

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The CULTURE PAGES

CRITICS

David Edelstein on *Trainwreck* and *Ant-Man* ... Lindsay Zoladz on *Tame Impala*'s Currents ...
Justin Davidson on *Brooklyn Bridge Park*.



Amy Schumer
and Bill Hader
in *Trainwreck*.

MOVIES / DAVID EDELSTEIN

Outside Amy Schumer

Trainwreck is a winner, until it turns into a Judd Apatow movie.



IF YOU'RE AN Amy Schumer lover (and if you're not, you might as well stop reading because never our twain shall meet), you'll be ecstatic to see her strut her stuff on the big screen in the mostly (about four-fifths) delightful sex comedy *Trainwreck*—and maybe a tad disappointed when the playbook turns out not to be entirely hers.

Schumer has cast herself as Amy, a magazine journalist who routinely gets blotto, has sex with rafts of men, and dodges her lovers' pleas for commitment—her worldview having been shaped by a dad (Colin Quinn) who, shortly before decamping, counseled her and her younger sister against “unrealistic” monogamy. Her character's confident sexuality might surprise fans of her TV show, *Inside Amy Schumer*, in which the sketches often bloom from Schumer's (or her onscreen alter ego's) doubts about her hotness—doubts that drive home the grotesqueness of a culture that forces women to see themselves through the eyes of men. Nothing in *Trainwreck* is as boundary-bursting, but it's fun to see Schumer when she's not weighed down by body shame. She wriggles through the movie in short, tight dresses with plunging necklines, buoyant even when blitzed. She's the hot girl here; she doesn't just get

dweebs. Her most ardent lover—played with wonderful dopey sweetness by the wrestling superstar John Cena—has muscles on top of muscles and is cut like the Grand Canyon. But Amy's giddiness in the sack yields quickly to jitters. Approximately one second after orgasm, her eyes seek out an exit. She's edgy about being breathed on.

The man who might save Amy from the unbearable tightness of being is the subject of her next magazine profile: Dr. Aaron Conners (Bill Hader), knee surgeon for superstar athletes, a Doctor Without Borders, and a study in non-virility. Hader plays the role as a human forehead. His voice is all treble, with no evident vibrations below the neck. At first, he and Schumer have one of those magical non-rapport rapports that are the province of gifted improv comedians: His lean frame seems to spring back from her soft curves. Slowly, though, Amy teases Aaron to the surface while Aaron forces Amy to slow down. One of the movie's running gags is that the ultrawhite Aaron pals around with an exceedingly modest LeBron James

(LeBron James), who warns Amy not to break the doctor's fragile heart. Amy is suitably weirded out, and so the movie tiptoes into the requisite falling-in-love montage.

So far, so fun. It's too bad Schumer is playing a familiar character, though one that's usually taken by men: the adult child whose gonzo behavior is appallingly funny at first, but who must learn that true happiness comes only by sobering up and embracing family values. In other words, it's that damn Judd Apatow template.

Apatow both directed *Trainwreck* and shepherded it to the screen, and he trusts Schumer's voice: He lets the scenes breathe and the actors find their rhythms. The problem is his own rhythms: nimble out of the gate with a sudden drooping down the stretch. Things got so heavy that I wondered, *Does Apatow trust comedy?* He's certainly a fan: He has a new book of interviews with comics, his childhood heroes. But I have a feeling that, like Woody Allen (although far more bourgeois), he equates it with juvenilia and self-indulgence, as well as That Which Is Anti-Family. And family is what Apatow is peddling. Even more telling than *This Is 40*—his big-screen home movie featuring his wife (Leslie Mann) and daughters—was *Funny People*, in which Adam Sandler's Adam Sandler-like comic superstar proved that he was unworthy of recapturing his old flame (Mann again) when he shrugged off an adorable video of her adorable daughter (an Apatow child again). There's a variation of that scene in *Trainwreck*, in which Amy resents having to listen to a little kid and we realize that she must change her life. If Apatow ever directs a remake of *The Bank Dick*, Egbert Sousé will join AA and become a scoutmaster.

One "serious" scene works: a eulogy Amy delivers that has a real dramatic build—it feels authentic. Brie Larson doesn't hit a banal note as Amy's sister, who took the opposite message from their father's abandonment and attached herself to an amiable zhlub (Mike Birbiglia). Otherwise, *Trainwreck* lives by its curlicues and cameos, which are like whiffs of nitrous oxide. As the editor of the snark-zine *S'nuff* (sample story: "Ugliest Celebrity Kids Under 6"), Tilda Swinton is a ghoulish combination of working-class Brit coarseness and regal Brit snobbery—devastatingly credible. The unpeppable Ezra Miller plays *S'nuff*'s intern, eerily stripped of defining traits until his hilarious send-off. Although a couple of scenes at an old folks' home don't have a satisfying shape, Quinn's stinging delivery keeps you smiling, and it's a treat to see Norman Lloyd, now in his 101st year, as a fellow resident.

A movie-within-a-movie—an apparently endless black-and-white romance starring

Daniel Radcliffe, Marisa Tomei, and many dogs—doesn't have a payoff, and a surreal bit with Chris Evert, Matthew Broderick, and Marv Albert bombs outright. But those bits give the film a sloppy, slaphappy vibe. They made me wish that Schumer's first script had been more of a surreal grab bag, like *Bananas*, instead of an extra-lewd formula rom-com, and that she'd worked in more of the satire that makes her and her largely female writing staff so treasurable.

Trainwreck, incidentally, is going to be playing side by side with *Amy*, the story of another Amy—Winehouse—whose father also ditched his family and left a hole in his daughter's heart (and self-esteem) that even the most swelling, soulful musical talent of the last quarter-century couldn't fill. The coincidence is uncanny. It's as if the universe were telling daughters, "Don't let your dad's presence or absence define you," and fathers, "You hold something precious and fragile in your hand. Don't be a dick."

THE BEST THING about Marvel's *Ant-Man* is that despite a computer-effects team larger than the population of Scandinavia, it plays like a charmingly tacky jet-suit robot picture for kids, the kind Japan used to churn out every week for a couple of thousand yen. It doesn't have that familiar Marvel bloat. The key is that instead of everything getting gargantuan, the hero (Paul Rudd) shrinks down to the size of an insect and rides on the backs of ants and other wee, winged creatures that look laughably fake. But who cares if the storytelling is smart?

It's smart-ish, anyway. Rudd plays Scott Lang, a San Francisco hacker who went to prison for pulling a Robin Hood on a corrupt corporation and now wants only to spend time with his little daughter. (Yes, this is another absent-father-and-daughter story.) Flirting with a life of crime, Scott is suddenly recruited by a scientist mogul played by a gray-bearded Michael Douglas to help him stop his ex-protégé, bald Corey Stoll, from helping to create an army of insect-size soldiers. (Wouldn't it be more effective to shrink the *opposing* armies and then just stomp on them?) Evangeline Lilly with a Louise Brooks bob plays Douglas's snippy daughter, who doesn't see why a cluck like Scott gets to wear the ant suit instead of her. The answer lies somewhere in the subatomic world, beyond the laws of time and space but not corny father-daughter melodrama.

Edgar Wright and Joe Cornish (*Shaun of the Dead*, etc.) are credited with the story, but I have a feeling their touch turned out to be too anarchic for Marvel. Adam McKay and Rudd get screenplay credit, too, which

means they're likely to blame for Scott's painfully witless interjections. It doesn't matter too much, given that the amiable Rudd is literally impossible to dislike. Literally, not figuratively. Try to dislike him—you can't. I thought Lilly looked better with her hair au naturel on *Lost*, but I'm happy to see her cool intelligence onscreen, and Stoll gives a lean, uninflected performance—no camp, no theatrics—that I found genuinely chilling.

Ant-Man isn't much more than pleasant (Peyton Reed directs limply), but anything Marvel that doesn't feel Marvel-ish makes me smile. My favorite moment is when Douglas has to comment acidly on something that happened in *The Avengers: Age of Ultron* and stumbles over the words—he can't get them out and is visibly distressed. If that was the take they used, what were the others like? Maybe he started screaming "F--- the %&# Avengers! I won't plug your dumbass convoluted %&# universe!" and left on a gurney. ■



Tame Impala's
"Cause I'm a Man"
music video.

MUSIC / LINDSAY ZOLADZ

A New High

On their third album, Aussie studio rats Tame Impala achieve psych-rock nirvana.

PSYCHEDELIA IS, once again, having a mainstream musical moment. Not long ago, pretty-boy Harlem rapper A\$AP Rocky released his bona fide acid album, *At.Long.Last.A\$AP*, a groggy but blissed-out odyssey featuring ambling, gently warped tracks like "L\$D." (That's not to be confused with Chance the Rapper's aptly titled 2013 mix tape *Acid Rap*,

which also warrants mentioning.) Then, in June, Miguel put out his bold *Wildheart*, a swirling, sprawling exploration of psychedelic, guitar-driven R&B. All the while, Miley Cyrus has been making a record with perennial space cadets the Flaming Lips—when she's not posting to the world's most hallucinogenic Instagram feed. Who's to say why this is happening—maybe the imminent legalization and subsequent de-edgification of weed has self-aware rebels scrambling for higher (and slightly more illegal) ground. But whatever the reason, 2015's proving to be a trippy year. Which means it's a funny time for Tame Impala, the most beloved psych-rock band in years, to release a dance album.

Tame Impala—named for the antelope, not the Chevy—is essentially one guy, 29-year-old Kevin Parker from Perth, Australia. *Front man* perhaps connotes something too extroverted to describe his role in the band; he's more of a sonic architect, constructing soundscapes in his studio and then later bringing on some touring members to air the material live. (The titles of the first two Tame Impala albums, 2010's *Innerspeaker* and 2012's *Lonerism*, speak volumes about Parker's creative process and personality.) In an interview around the time that *Innerspeaker* was released Parker professed a love for “the kind of music that's, like, the result of one person or a few people constructing an awesome symphony of sound. You can layer your own voice 700 times for half a second if you want.” And often, it sounded like he did; both of those albums were very good, but they also had a kind of look-at-what-we-can-do maximalism that was occasionally off-putting. Which is not an unforgivable crime—when you're a tinkerer like Parker, that's just what you do on your first couple of records. But as Tame Impala's sublime third album, *Currents*, proves, he's realized how much more he can do with less.

Currents arrives complete with the perfect psych-meets-dance-music creation myth: Parker has said the idea for the record came to him when he was listening to the Bee Gees' “Stayin' Alive” on mushrooms. And like an audacious Gibb neckline, *Currents* has a confidence that the previous Tame Impala albums sometimes lacked; the dazzling eight-minute opener “Let It Happen” is, yes, eight minutes long, but it's still an exercise in minimalism and restraint. It's got a tight, repetitive groove, but there are thrills in the pattern breaks, like when the mechanical beat suddenly stutters like a rhythmically malfunctioning machine. As with much of the record, “Let It Happen” occasionally recalls Daft Punk's 2001 culture shifter *Discovery*, and it serves a similar

sequential function as that album's “One More Time”—a jet blast out of the stratosphere and into the colorful world you'll be inhabiting for the next 50 minutes. With its clean lines and sleek surfaces, *Currents* is an achievement in design as much as melody; to listen to it often feels like being inside an exceptionally comfortable commercial spaceship, like the ones Richard Branson is no doubt designing.

Although *Innerspeaker* and *Lonerism* both showed Parker to possess a sonic imagination that extended beyond pastiche, they also harked back rather obviously to '60s and '70s rock. There was something uncanny about Tame Impala's particular game of spot-the-influence; writer Jayson Greene once described Parker's vocals as sounding “like someone trapped John Lennon's vocal take from ‘A Day in the Life’ in a jar and taught it to sing new songs.” The Lennon affect has dissolved on *Currents*, and Parker has hit on something approaching a signature vocal style, a soft-edged falsetto that diffuses into the atmosphere around him. Which means he can pull off the liquid funk of “New Person, Same Old Mistakes” or give a tonal continuity to the epic “Eventually”

as it pivots between a Black Sabbath-esque riff and a chorus you could hear on adult-contemporary radio. Tame Impala is a rock band unafraid of softness, and some of the album's most inspired moments are delicate flirtations with schmaltzy '80s pop. My favorite song on the album is probably “The Moment,” which hinges on a chorus that sounds like the hand bells from Naked Eyes' “Always Something There to Remind Me” let loose in zero gravity.

As with most practitioners of lonerism, Parker is prone to getting a little stuck in his own head, and many of *Currents*'s songs are about rising above the mental chatter and achieving internal peace: “It's always around me, all this noise/ But not nearly as loud as the voice saying, let it happen.” Miraculously, given that New Age-y lyrical slant, *Currents*' only slip into actual cheese is “Past Life,” an ode to an ex-flame centered on a spoken-word piece that calls to mind the Aussie cousin of Radiohead's “Fitter Happier” robot covering “Marvin's Room.” But this small blunder makes you appreciate the intelligence on display for the rest of the album—how easily it would have been for Parker to stray into the realm of bloated pretension, how wisely he keeps himself in check.

Guitars have been an endangered species for years, and revivalists have had difficulty resonating with younger listeners in a world where EDM is looking like this generation's rock and roll. But Tame Impala has found a way to bridge the gap without pandering—

becoming the rock band that dance kids can admit to liking. *Currents* has every mark of a deserved breakthrough; it should bump the band up a few more notches on the Coachella poster. The secret might be Parker's love of making “guitars sound like synths and drums sound like drum samples”; rock music is allowed to be more modern than something Jack White wants you to play on a Victrola. “I'm obsessed with confusing people as to the origin of a sound,” Parker has said. Scrambling perceptions is the oldest trick in the psychedelic book, but *Currents* sounds fresh enough to fool a new generation into thinking he invented it. ■

ARCHITECTURE /
JUSTIN DAVIDSON

A Pittance for Parks

Why is Bill de Blasio losing on an issue where he's unopposed?

LIKE EVERY SUCCESSFUL New York hangout, Brooklyn Bridge Park is jammed. Long before it's finished, before the wavy meadows open on Pier 6 later this summer or Bjarke Ingels's swooping lookout is built, before a hilly upland stretch has even been contoured and before towers rise on its edge, the park has already started to shape childhood memories. Though the young greenery still has that fragile, uncertain look, every basketball court is in use, every lawn dotted with people irradiating their semi-naked bodies.

This luxuriant chip of land at the edge of Brooklyn clearly draws its public from well beyond its fringe of affluent streets. The borough's various ethnic and religious populations seem to have worked out a tacit time-share deal. One midweek afternoon, kids teemed like minnows in the water park and avoided the scalding slides, while their minders, some in chadors, others in sheitels, huddled in the scarce shade. The picnic tables were full, the coastline hazed in the smoke from grilling meat.

All that indolence is hard-won. The process of turning 85 acres of flat, filthy coast into greenswards has been combative and long, and it's not over. Michael Van Valkenburgh, the Frederick Law

CURRENTS
TAME IMPALA.
INTERSCOPE
RECORDS.

BROOKLYN
BRIDGE PARK
85 ACRES.

Olmsted of Brooklyn Bridge Park, has done wonders with a chopped-up strip of land, but the compromises show. The looping paths are short; the noise-blocking mound that screens off the BQE had to be scooted toward the water. Worst of all, the park shares the shore with several big, clunky buildings that justify themselves by funding its upkeep. The final additions to the waterfront skyline will be a pair of dull towers by ODA that too obviously recycle the area's industrial muscle. Visible across the harbor, they demand more enterprising designs. But architecture would not mollify the neighbors who condemn what they see as the unholy marriage of real-estate interests and the public realm. That dissent has created the absurd situation of residents' battling a park that has improved their lives and raised the value of their homes.

Brooklyn Bridge Park is a splendid straggler in the legacy of Michael Bloomberg, one that Bill de Blasio has shown little interest in. Bloomberg added another 830 acres—nearly a whole Central Park's worth—of new greenery to the city, some in tourist destinations like the High Line, but also in areas like Hunters Point South, and in less celebrated packets like Concrete Plant Park along the Bronx River. De Blasio, on the other hand, thinks small. In the latest round of budget haggles, advocates persuaded the City Council to restore \$8.7 million to avoid laying off gardeners and maintenance workers—a minuscule victory. Mark Levine, who chairs the council's parks committee, calculates that the mayor plans to spend \$350 million a year on capital projects, compared with \$450 million a year under Bloomberg. The Community Park Initiative it launched last year sluices \$130 million into 35 neglected parks, which is a fine thing—but to trumpet it as a major achievement only underlines the mayor's odd modesty in this area. His commissioner, Mitchell Silver, must spend his days doing the administrative equivalent of mending his one good suit.

This is crazy. It's hard to imagine a more obvious progressive cause than parks. Their only purposes are leisure and beauty, freely dispensed. Could there be a better antidote to the relentless pursuit of money, a purer assertion of democratic ideals, than a fabulously valuable square foot of soil given over to growing grass?

What is urban nature for? The answer to this question has both philosophical and economic implications, as Olmsted understood. Living in cities, he said in 1880, can produce such vague but disabling forms of malaise as “‘vital exhaustion,’ ‘nervous irritation’ and ‘constitutional depression’ ... excessive materialism, [leading] to loss of faith and lowness of spirit, by which life is



Brooklyn Bridge Park

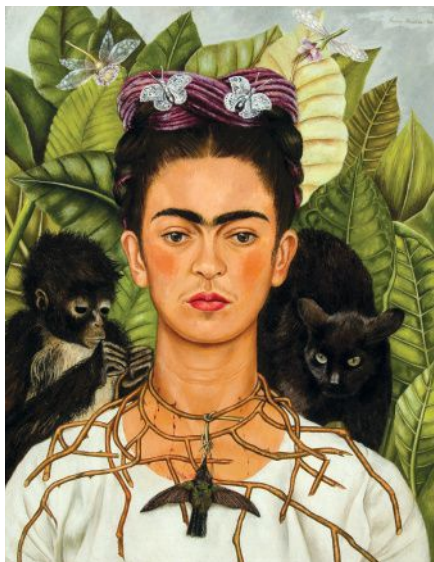
made, to some, questionably worth the living.” Parks, he proposed, could help mitigate desperation, could make New Yorkers less neurotic. (Ever the practical man, he didn't stop there: Improving citizens' mental health was just a means to fiscal well-being, improving cities' “wealth-producing and tax-bearing capacity” too.) Shabby and unsafe parks undo Olmsted's virtues: They increase anxiety and infect neighborhoods with the spirit of abandonment.

Living with Bloomberg's legacy of parks is a bit like inheriting a drafty castle: very nice, but who pays for the upkeep? Bloomberg's answer was that the deluxe Edens like Brooklyn Bridge Park could finance themselves by getting in bed—excuse me, partnering—with developers and courting philanthropy; less glamorous parks would rely on the city. The trouble is that the wealthy won't readily fund drainage work and rat control in places they never visit. The gritty stuff of maintenance is a job that for the most part the city has to handle on its own. It can't be outsourced, and its costs can't be traded for naming rights. But it is crucial. Here, too, Olmsted had wisdom to offer. Healthy trees last for decades, well-planned green space almost never gets reabsorbed into the weave of streets, and investments in parks pay off over generations. “Make-shift, temporizing, catch-penny work upon them is always extravagant work.”

De Blasio need not sulk that all the sexy projects were taken before he showed up. The city recently reopened High Bridge, an elegant mid-19th-century aqueduct that vaults over the Harlem River between Harlem and the South Bronx, but the 119-acre Highbridge Park below remains a fixable mess, part ravishing wilderness, part diorama of decay. In the Bronx, a nonprofit

group called the New York Restoration Project has just floated the Haven Project, a plan to knit the neighborhood's best qualities together with a network of green spaces. Then there's the Brooklyn Strand, a plan designed by Claire Weisz of WXY and sponsored by (among others) the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership to link up a set of throwaway public spaces between the waterfront and Borough Hall. Imagine riding your bike over the Brooklyn Bridge and ending up on a landscaped slope rather than in a traffic hellhole, or being able to stroll along a leafy boulevard from Dumbo or the housing projects by the BQE straight to MetroTech and beyond. These are not just environmental sops or do-gooder fantasies; they are varied, imaginative, and practical ways to improve the public realm for all, amplifying assets that the city already has. A wise leader would be trumpeting these projects and, more important, funding them.

Bloomberg's credo was clear: Plant new parks, leverage private money, and make New York a magnet for visitors, investments, and residents. The de Blasio administration's approach is ... we'll get back to you. I hope they do. “Bloomberg's philosophy developed over time,” points out Tupper Thomas, the executive director of the advocacy group New Yorkers for Parks. “If you had talked to them a year and a half into the first term, they wouldn't have had that clarity.” True, but so far, de Blasio is ignoring one of the most cost-effective ways of easing New Yorkers' lives, irrespective of income. As Thomas points out, painting a bench, clearing some brush, organizing a troupe of volunteer gardeners—these are cheap, immediate measures that can make a park feel less desolate and more like home. “You create a sense that the city cares.” ■



FRIDA KAHLO

ART • GARDEN • LIFE

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To Do

The CULTURE PAGES

TWENTY-FIVE
THINGS TO SEE,
HEAR, WATCH,
AND READ.

JULY 15–29

POP

1. Listen to Miguel

Splendidly crafted sexytimes.

RCA.

"The muted world, does it dream in colors?" Miguel asks in the opening moments of his great new album *Wildheart*—a sprawling, prismatic reverie that proves, at the very least, that he does. Bolder and more atmospheric than his 2012 breakthrough *Kaleidoscope Dream*, *Wildheart* deftly blends rock and R&B into a genreless swirl and describes in lyrical detail the kind of fantasies that would make even Prince blush.

LINDSAY ZOLADZ

CLASSICAL MUSIC

2. Hear Strauss's Daphne

Played by an exquisite ensemble.

July 15, Avery Fisher Hall.

The Cleveland Orchestra, led by the Austrian Franz Welser-Möst, is the heartland's protector of Mitteleuropean authenticity, and it joins the Lincoln Center Festival bearing Strauss's heartrending opera about the nymph who transubstantiates herself into a tree.

JUSTIN DAVIDSON

TV

3. Watch I Am Jazz

Giving reality TV a better name.

TLC, July 15 at 10 p.m.

The timing couldn't be better for this reality series about the life of teenager Jazz Jennings, who was born biologically male but told her parents she identified as female as soon as she could talk. The series follows Jennings as she enters a new school at 14, after years of living as a transgender child. Tough, funny, and emotional without being gratuitously sentimental, this is one of TV's summer sleepers.

MATT ZOLLER SEITZ

BOOKS

4. Read Harper Lee's Go Set a Watchman

Scout's second (or is it first?) chapter.

HarperCollins.

Regardless of the squirm-inducing circumstances of its rediscovery and publication—or even, maybe, of its quality—the 89-year-old author's "prequel" to *To Kill a Mockingbird* (actually a precursor draft) is an important cultural document. Embargoed until publication, this more directly personal novel features a full-grown Scout in the "present" of the mid-'50s, trying to balance her progressive New York life with the pull of family and history back in segregated Alabama. It could tell us more about its beloved author's experiences and attitudes than anyone has to date.

BORIS KACHKA

PODCAST

5. Listen to Mystery Show

Pleasantly probing.

Gimlet Media.

This new podcast solves little mysteries, conclusively, definitively, absolutely. But the real draw is that it finds emotional angles on just about everything, with an "everybody has a story" attitude and a gently meandering narrative style from host Starlee Kine.

MARGARET LYONS

THEATER

6. See Patti LuPone in Shows for Days

Ionesco among the Amish.

Mitzi E. Newhouse Theater, through August 23.

Douglas Carter Beane has written not just a vehicle for Patti LuPone but a glossy and curve-

hugging Ferrari of a comedy. As Irene Sampson Keller, the idealistic and overdramatic theatrical empress of Reading, Pennsylvania, circa 1973, LuPone burrows deep into the neurotic and political circumstances that make such a creature so awesome and necessary. The result is a precisely detailed and never less than hilarious triumph.

JESSE GREEN

ART

7. **See Flaming June**

The season's spirit, in one transfixing image.

The Frick, through September 6.

In oranges burning into blazing red, the sprawling female body of Frederic Leighton's *Flaming June* becomes a stand-in for the long days and hot nights of summer. See this woman asleep, lost in something seething, filling the frame with steamy dreams, and snuggle a little at the thought of a male painter trying to come to terms with women: looking at them, making metaphors, always coming up short, but always going all out.

JERRY SALTZ

SO, LAVERNE COX, WHAT CULTURAL THING ARE YOU MOST INTO RIGHT NOW?



"I just finished *Sense8* on Netflix. You basically have eight people who were all born on the same day, around the world, who sense what is going on with the other people, and at crucial moments in their lives they're able to sort of teleport themselves to that person and use the knowledge and information that they have to fight, to hack, to help each other. Nomi is my favorite, though I'm biased—my friend Jamie Clayton plays her. She's a revolutionary trans character on television. At its core, it's a show about loving, supporting, and helping each other. It's a beautiful story."

TV

8. **Watch Humans**

Anticipating the singularity.

AMC, Sundays at 9 p.m.

Humans presents a reality in which robots, built to look just like us, act as domestic servants; the ripples of panic materialize when some of these "synths" show signs of consciousness. The dystopian tech drama is chillingly good—not as an image of the future but as a reflection of how our culture responds to what is alien.

MOVIES

9.-13. **See Amy, Cartel Land, Stray Dog, Do I Sound Gay?, and The Wolfpack**

Doc-o-rama.

In theaters.

Forget dinosaurs, paunchy Terminators, ant-superheroes, etc. and escape into reality with a bumper crop of docs for every fancy. *Amy* penetrates deep into the self-destructive psyche (and art) of Amy Winehouse, the greatest female vocalist of the last half-century. *Cartel Land* brings you face to face with real-life vigilantes on the U.S.-Mexican border and inside one of Mexico's most murderous provinces. *Stray Dog* meditates on the half-life existence of a burly biker vet in the Ozarks. *Do I Sound Gay?* explores whether

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AUGUST—Buzzworthy bands and DJs, organized by MoMA PopRally

SOLUTION TO LAST ISSUE'S PUZZLE

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people actually do. Of course, crap movies do have their place: Watch how they sustained a group of brothers imprisoned by their crazy dad in the great *The Wolfpack*. DAVID EDELSTEIN

THEATER

14. See The Wild Party

Raise the roof.

New York City Center, July 15 through 18.

In 2000, theatergoers had the weird opportunity to fight over two musicals called *The Wild Party*, both based on the same Jazz Age poem. Michael John LaChiusa's ran briefly on Broadway; Andrew Lipka's even brieflier Off. Now the "Encores Off-Center!" series offers a second look at Lipka's version, with a stellar cast led by Sutton Foster, Steven Pasquale, and Brandon Victor Dixon. J.G.

DANCE

15. See Lil Buck

And sharpen your own moves, too.

Lincoln Center Out of Doors,
July 25 at 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.

The Memphis jookin' maestro is worshipped for his liquid-limbed, seemingly time-stopping style, but he's also got the finely tuned musicality of a ballet dancer. At a late-morning show, he'll use violinist Yoon Kwon's melodies as a foil, then teach the audience a few basic steps; later, he kicks off an evening with jazz masters Randy Newman and Wycliffe Gordon. REBECCA MILZOFF

THEATER

16. See Kafka on the Shore

From page to stage.

David H. Koch Theater, July 23 through 26.

An Oedipal curse, an old man in search of a stone with supernatural powers, epic romance, talking animals aplenty: Haruki Murakami's magical-realist novel cries out for a dramatic interpretation. At the Lincoln Center Festival, Japan's Ninagawa Company embraces the spectacle (and, yes, there will be talking cats).

ART

17. See Jazz-minh Moore's Middle of Nowhere

Walking in fields of gold.

Claire Oliver Gallery, through July 31.

The moving sight of a single-woman artist heading out across America in a beat-up camper, on the familiar mythic voyage to find nothing and the self, is captured with vivid painterly pathos in Moore's miniaturist-naturalist, almost souvenir-snapshot paintings. We see, lovingly depicted on cast-off pieces of beautifully burnished wood, blazing sun, empty desert, open spaces, and other strangers on this journey of nothingness. J.S.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

18. Hear Harry Partch

A tuneful travelogue.

New York City Center, July 23 and 24.

Partch was a true American original who built his own instruments, invented his own music theory,

and bummed around the country in the depths of the Depression, jotting down the songs and musical speech of those he met along the way. The Lincoln Center Festival offers a two-part tribute: First, percussionist and singer David Moss performs excerpts from *Bitter Music*, the journal with tunes that resulted from those wanderings, in a Partchian hybrid of concert and talk; then, kindred spirit and fellow composer Heiner Goebbels directs *Delusion of the Fury*, Partch's final large-scale score for his Dr. Seuss-like "instrumentarium," as a theatrical extravaganza. J.D.

POP

19. See U2

In the city of blinding lights.

Madison Square Garden,
July 18 through 31.

Following a series of snafus—Apple's *Songs of Innocence* debacle, the Edge's punchline-writes-itself tumble off a narrow stage—the ever-resilient foursome return to New York for eight nights at the Garden (checkmate, Billy Joel). For the past decade or so, U2's entrenched success has made the band's music feel more and more complacent, but their live show is always full of fight and urgency—and will probably be more triumphant than usual given that, for the first time in more than a decade, they've actually got something to prove. L.Z.



The Performance

Jesse Green on Gideon Glick in Significant Other.

Sometimes an actor merely has to get on the bus the playwright is driving. Other times, he has to drive the bus himself. In *Significant Other*, Joshua Harmon's new play about a gay guy who's left in the dust as his gal pals each get married, Gideon Glick is giving that kind of performance: masterful well beyond what the script offers. Sure, the lines are amusing, but the character of Jordan Berman, perpetual romantic screw-up, doesn't make much sense as written. In the first act, he seems functional, even desirable, and so unflaggingly supportive as his friends pair off that you fear he will have to break big in the second. Luckily, Glick, with his posable artist's-mannequin body, has no trouble physicalizing Jordan's twisted emotions even when the plot is going for jokes. So by the time he gets to the trumped-up climax, a relentlessly self-pitying aria in which Jordan squanders every ounce of sympathy he's painstakingly collected over the preceding two hours, you at least understand where the explosion comes from. Like most of the audience on the night I saw it, you may even find yourself applauding—not for the character, but for Glick, who makes real feeling out of false premises.

At the Laura Pels Theatre through August 16.

DANCE

20. See DanceNoise

Bringing the past to the present.

Whitney Museum, July 22 through 26.

In the early '80s, Anne Jobst and Lucy Sexton's subversive performance pieces, blending modern dance with tongue-in-cheek social commentary, vividly captured the burgeoning No Wave ethos. For this residency, they'll re-create their classic shows, perform new work, and reimagine King Tut's Wah Wah Hut, the fondly remembered East Village bar where they hosted a weekly series. R.M.

THEATER/TV

21. Watch Understudies

Please stand by.

Dailymotion.com/understudies.

Elisabeth Gray understudied Emilia Clarke as Holly Golightly in the recent, horrible *Breakfast at Tiffany's* on Broadway, so she knows what she's talking about in the satirical new web series she co-created with Daniel Zimble. She plays Astoria Bagg, understudy to Holly Gonnighly, the lead of a Capote-vampire mash-up called *Twilight at Tiffany's*. The first season (13 short episodes) makes for a terrific summer Schadenfreude binge.

J.G.

MOVIES

22. See True Crime

Root for the bad guys.

Film Forum, through August 5.

Cinema was built on true crime, so let's wallow in the mythic sensationalism of Film Forum's four-week festival, featuring gangsters, Western outlaws, serial killers, body snatchers, and psychos of all classes and abilities, from the likes of Hitchcock, Hawks, Kazan, Boetticher, Corman, Frankenheimer, Penn, Lumet, Imamura, De Palma, Friedkin, Spielberg, Scorsese, and Malick. Consider all three takes on Leopold and Loeb—*Compulsion*, *Rope*, and *Swoon*—or celebrate the capture of the Dannemora fugitives with *I Am a Fugitive From a Chain Gang*, *Birdman of Alcatraz*, and *Escape From Alcatraz*.

D.E.

BOOKS

23. Read Stephen Jarvis's Death and Mr. Pickwick

Charles would be proud.

FSG.

Historical fiction always contends with the problem of how to fit research and hindsight seamlessly into an in-the-moment narrative. Jarvis meets the challenge ingeniously in this alternate history of Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers*. His main character is a researcher hell-bent on proving that Boz's first character was stolen from the now-forgotten illustrator Robert Seymour. In the process, he unfurls the social canvas of 1830s England in its boozy, frumpy glory, evincing a knack for puns and character sketches (and serial digressions) his idol would likely admire.

B.K.

MOVIES

24. Watch Love Is Strange

Apt post-Pride viewing.

On Amazon Instant Video and Netflix DVD.

Ira Sachs's bittersweet, gracefully acted winter-of-life romantic drama is the perfect film to watch post-gay-marriage ruling. It's about obstacles overcome and obstacles still standing. Ben (John Lithgow) and George (Alfred Molina) tie the knot after 39 years together, but as a consequence George loses his job directing a Catholic-school choir and the pair become homeless. As they sip drinks at the Stonewall Inn, the grim

irony hangs: The upshot of their marriage is they can't sleep side by side. Onward!

D.E.

THE 60-SECOND BOOK EXCERPT: 'PALIMPSEST'

From Matthew Battle's meditation on written language (Norton, July 27).



For the sake of writing, we raze forest and burn coal by the trainload—but these are mere scratches compared to the vast, Ozymandian ruin our other civilized habits threaten to make of the earth. The crucial question is not whether our attention spans will evaporate, our cultural standards wither, our styles and genres fade. It is this: can writing help us undo what we have done with it? Whether in the form of spell or star gauge, scribal scrawl or machine-legible code, or in its increasingly abstruse and vibrant electronic modes, does writing give us the means to outpace, and ultimately to stay, the devastation wrought by our comprehensive material entanglements?

POP

25. Listen to Vince Staples's Summertime '06

MC on the make.

Def Jam.

The rising Long Beach rapper Vince Staples's first album combines the bold stylistic dissonance of Kanye West's *Yeezus* with Kendrick Lamar's humanitarian eye for detail; so far, it's rap's strongest debut of the year.

L.Z.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29

allowed audience members to rate the speakers in real time. Landrieu said he hoped they liked him. Coates said, a little masochistically, he hoped they hated him.

Landrieu seemed mindful of all the ways a well-meaning white liberal in a situation like this might embarrass himself. He knew all the statistics about the scale of murders in African-American communities and mentioned them; he stated the problem in a way that focused on blacks as victims of violence rather than perpetrators; he told the audience that he had recently personally apologized for slavery; he said the core issue was “a pattern of behavior that has developed amongst young African-American men since 1980.” Coates asked if the change in 1980 wasn’t simply the increased prevalence of handguns. Landrieu said that was part of it. Then he talked about personal responsibility. “If you knocked me off the chair last week, that’s on you, but if you come back and I’m still on the floor this week, that’s on me.”

“It *is* my fault if I knocked you off the chair,” Coates said.

“I didn’t say it wasn’t,” said the mayor.

“No, it’s never *not* my fault that I knocked you off the chair.”

Landrieu started to talk about “black-on-black crime,” then retreated, saying he might be using the wrong words. Coates said the term didn’t offend him: “I think it’s actually inaccurate.” The plain fact, he said, was that when black people killed one another, the victims were their neighbors. They didn’t kill their neighbors *because* they were black. Inner-city violence, he said, had everything to do with the legacy of structural neglect in the inner city and nothing at all to do with culture. Even from the cheap seats, it was clear that Landrieu was struggling, that there was some turn in the politics of race that he had not fully comprehended, some way in which the old Clintonite phrasings were failing. In their place was a more radical language, of structuralism and supremacy. Now that language has a place in Aspen.

Coates’s book is, he said, “oddly conservative” in its sense of the futility of individuals confronting the structure of white supremacy, in its pessimism about what can be

changed. Goldberg asked what he would do if he were in Landrieu’s position—surely there was something, “I don’t know what I’d do if I were mayor, but I could tell you what I’d do if I was king.” He’d let criminals out of prison, he said. “And, by the way, I include violent criminals in that.” Goldberg asked what he meant by “violent.” “Gun crime, too,” Coates said.

There is a radical-chic crowd assembling around Coates. The oddity is that there is no obvious opposing force. Conservatives have not focused on him; the old anti-structuralist wing of liberalism has faded. In Aspen, even people who actually disagreed with him seemed to want to believe they did not. A woman in a nautical top (“Ta-Nehisi, I think you’re the greatest,” she began) asked Coates whether, in addition to structural solutions, black icons ought to do more to condemn crime. She mentioned “Oprah, Jay Z, whoever the kids relate to.” Coates patiently brought up the Charleston families forgiving the man who murdered their loved ones. “There’s no lack of effort on behalf of black people,” he said. “I think black folks are doing just fine.”

Late one evening at Aspen, Coates was in a lounge with some of the conference’s other speakers. Things were a little bit boozy. Melody Barnes, formerly the president’s domestic-policy adviser, sailed by. Goldberg monologued jokes from a couch. Everyone in the room was almost exactly equally famous—just a little bit famous—but somehow the evening seemed to hinge on when NPR’s Michele Norris would arrive. A friend of Coates’s was back from a conference-sponsored tour of a marijuana-grow operation, a little high and with product in her backpack. Coates inquired with interest about how she had procured it. The friend said that Coates had it all wrong, that this was Colorado in 2015 and no evasions were required, that all you had to do was go down to the store.

Progress was in the air—days after the Confederate flag had fallen and gay marriage had been legalized across the country, here we were in a place where you could buy marijuana by walking into a store. The changes seemed to speak to the great question of the late Obama era: Would the half-century-long era of increasing prosperity and expanding human freedom prove to be an aberration or a new, permanent state? To Coates, the long arc of history was simply too strong, too rooted in human nature. From Baldwin’s writing, he had concluded that though struggle was essential, progress was not ordained. If white supremacy were ever eradicated, Coates said, he suspected it would simply be because the country had found “a new peon class,” someone else to kick around.

“Chaos is what we have,” he said. “That is what I believe. If to the end of its existence America harbors white supremacy, I don’t know how remarkable that would be. France has dealt with anti-Semitism since its inception.” America was built by humans, he said. “These things tend to have flaws.”

What a strange, dark, beguiling place America is. It killed Prince Jones. It reveres Ta-Nehisi Coates.

COATES IS LEAVING the country. In a few weeks, he’ll move to Paris with his wife and son for a year. Part of the attraction is simple pleasure. Part of it is the intellectual project of viewing state supremacy and race in another place, to discern whether America is truly exceptional or not. Part of it is the welcome exchange of one social mask for another: Because his French is not so smooth yet, he says, he is seen first as American in Paris rather than as black, and this is a relief.

Lately Coates has been putting himself through rituals of self-improvement: He has been learning to swim, and he has been learning French—conjugating verbs, aligning tenses. One Friday morning at the end of June, his instructor at the Berlitz school in Rockefeller Center asked him about the upcoming trip. In French, Coates said, “My wife tells me that when I am in France I am a different person.” Madame Danielle expressed surprise. “A different person,” he insisted. “Very extroverted. Very nice. Just different.”

Paris carries with it reminders of the black intellectuals who moved there before: Richard Wright, and especially Baldwin. “I think my exile saved my life,” Baldwin wrote in *Esquire* in 1961, “for it inexorably confirmed something which Americans appear to have great difficulty accepting. Which is, simply, this: a man is not a man until he’s able and willing to accept his own vision of the world, no matter how radically this vision departs from that of others.” To be clear, he added: “When I say ‘vision’ I do not mean ‘dream.’”

Coates’s vision is already clear. In the chapter of his book set in Paris, Coates finds himself ruminating on the old Baltimore codes that took him too long to shake. “What I wanted was to put as much distance between you and that blinding fear as possible,” Coates writes to his son, about the allure of Paris. “I wanted you to see different people living by different rules.” Travel is an ordinary, bourgeois desire for one’s children: “I want him to see more than I saw,” Coates said. It is also the instinct of a survivor, who realizes his home is fundamentally inhospitable: to keep an eye on the exits, and to map out the routes of escape. ■



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RECYCLING IS a happy word. And recycling, in theory, seems like a cheery civic virtue designed for our common betterment, but, in practice, it's a business like anything else. Sims Municipal Recycling, which contracts with the city to handle our recycling, has its main facility on the 30th Street Pier, near Sunset Park, Brooklyn. Above the ceaseless clatter of cans falling through three stories of sorting machines, Thomas Outerbridge, the facility's general manager, stands on a catwalk and points at what's below: "That I can sell, and that I can sell," he says, gesturing toward piles of scrap metal and bundles of reclaimed plastic bottles. Dirty plastic bags, however, are hard to sell. Since plastic bags are so insubstantial, they're just as likely to get tangled up in the recycling facility's machinery, causing expensive shutdowns, as they are to be bundled up and processed to be sold. Their current worth, he says, is "somewhere between two cents a pound and landfill." (As for so-called biodegradable plastic bags, they're kind of a non-starter, at least for environmental purposes, because they typically end up in a landfill, and nothing effectively biodegrades in a landfill, not even food.)

It's true that clean plastic grocery bags are theoretically recyclable, just like any other plastic resin, but, as Outerbridge says, "'theoretically recyclable' doesn't mean anything to me. There's either a market for it or there's not." As a recycled product, film plastic is very hard to process (because it's so light) and very hard to clean. This is why, technically, you're not supposed to include plastic bags in your curbside recycling in New York.

It's also theoretically possible to build an entirely new recycling infrastructure that recycles clean plastic bags—witness Novolex's \$30 million recycling plant. But anti-bag activists argue that the only reason companies like Novolex promote bag recycling is that it makes consuming plastic bags more palatable and helps assuage the guilt consumers feel. It's not just activists who say this. In an interview with Susan Freinkel for her 2011 book *Plastic: A Toxic Love Story*, Roger Bernstein of the Ameri-

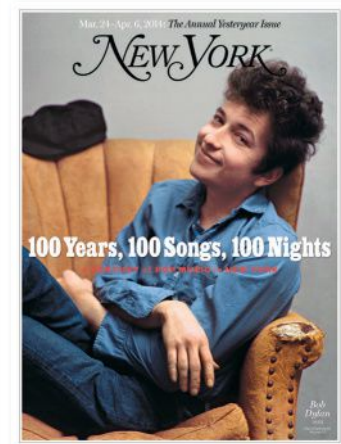
can Chemistry Council explained why the plastics industry has invested so much in promoting recycling. Concerns around plastic products, he says, can be divided into "fear issues" and "guilt issues." And recycling, he says, functions as "a guilt eraser."

JENNIE ROMER is a lawyer from California who moved to New York three years ago hoping to work pro bono with the city on plastic bags. A few years back, she'd gotten involved in San Francisco's fight to ban bags, and she's since become, somewhat accidentally, the country's leading expert in plastic-bag law. Her anti-bag activism has earned her backlash from both sides. "I get a lot of tea-party-esque emails, but I also get pushback from environmentalists who say, 'There are bigger things to spend your time on.' But this is a thing I chose *because* it is small. Something like climate change—that's really daunting. With this, you can see a difference."

For New York, Romer favors a ten-cent fee. "With a ban, you're saying, 'You can't have this thing anymore,'" she says. "But with a fee, consumers are presented with a choice: 'Is it worth it to you to purchase this bag?'" In Ireland, after the government imposed a 15-cent fee in 2002, bag usage fell by 94 percent—in part because, as a reporter for the *Times* noted, "Plastic bags became socially unacceptable—on par with wearing a fur coat or not cleaning up after your dog."

That last point may hint at another coming shift. Whether New York adopts a ban, a fee, or does nothing—in short, whether plastic bags go the way of smoke-filled restaurants or are temporarily snatched from the brink of oblivion like Bloomberg's detested Big Gulps—the plastic bag's day as a mundane everyday item, thoughtlessly ignored to propagate under our sinks, is likely over for good. Being the person at the grocery store digging out the goofy reusable knit shopping bag or that weathered WNYC tote no longer marks you as a hapless hippie but as a thoughtful citizen, or at least not a total weirdo. In fact, it's the guy in line handing out custom-printed plastic bags that read **I CHOOSE PLASTIC** who now seems like the social outlier. When Washington introduced its fee, psychologists who studied it concluded that what caused consumers to reject plastic bags was not the added cost but the sudden social stigma of being the one person who still takes the plastic bags. The smoking ban, for example, would have failed miserably if they'd tried it ten years earlier. Ten years later, though, it seems like the most natural thing in the world. ■

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didn't ruffle her—she seemed to actively court confusion about her gender, sexuality, and even species, as though any kind of inscrutability only made her more powerful and alluring. (She joked about her “dick” in 2010, in the now-classic “Telephone” video; she wore a strap-on on the cover of *Q*.) Seeing all this happening during the era of “no homo” felt revolutionary.

Growing up—much like, I am going to estimate, 100 percent of the population—I felt stifled by the stereotypes and expectations of my gender. Even from the privileged position of being a straight, white, cisgender woman, I still walked around in a constant panic that I was doing femininity wrong. (I tripped every time I put on heels. I played sports a little too competitively in gym class. I went through a very unfortunate brown-lipstick phase.) Coming of age in the Britney era did not exactly help my or any young woman's feelings of feminine inadequacy; the message she telegraphed to the girl population was “You're either born hot or you're not. Sorry.” With Britney, femininity was something innate. So what I loved most about Lady Gaga was how unapologetically fake she was, especially when she was at her most girlie. (The wigs! The affect! The Alexander McQueen shoes!) The much-needed message that she beamed to the world was that—even if you are a straight, cisgender woman, as she turned out to be—femininity is always a drag act. And so, during her reign, pop stars' ideas of womanhood mutated into something robotic, grotesque, and unavoidably performative. This leveled the playing field somehow. In the early days of Gaga's rule, I thought often of a quote from the theorist Mary Russo: “To put on femininity with a vengeance suggests the power of taking it off.”

Less than a decade later, female pop stars—much like the rest of society—have come so far in scrambling gender stereotypes that it seems a little old-fashioned to have to stop and point all of this out. “Weirdness” soon became, of all things, the norm. Katy Perry, Ke\$ha, and Nicki Minaj all appeared as if in a contest to out-strange one another. In a 2013 New

York Times piece, Heather Havrilesky noted the way in which Minaj, then an *American Idol* judge whose of-the-moment values stood in stark contrast to her generational predecessor Mariah Carey, came to embody this very millennial power of brazen artificiality: “Freaky fakeness on the outside—bouffant hairdos, gigantic shoes, bizarre outfits—is now interpreted as a sign of strength and realness on the inside.”

We had Gaga to thank for this. And, also, to blame.

IN A WAY, *Artpop*, Lady Gaga's third album, released in November 2013, was too big to succeed. Finally fatigued of this ever-mounting arms race of weirdness, the pop pendulum was swinging toward minimalism. Kanye West had moved from the gilded grandeur of *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy* to the stark *Yeezus*. Nicki had put away those Technicolor bouffants in favor of a less over-the-top style. The year's most Zeitgeist-capturing single was Lorde's understated, out-of-nowhere anti-artifice manifesto “Royals.” When *Spin* mentioned the latter hit in its list of the year's best songs, the publication couldn't help but see “Royals” as a counterpoint to Gaga: “True artpop rarely announces itself as such.”

Artpop sold considerably fewer copies than Gaga's 2011 blockbuster, *Born This Way*, but it also wasn't quite the career-endangering disaster that some publications made it out to be. Gaga's madcap pop odyssey did similar first-week numbers to Katy Perry's *Prism* and Miley Cyrus's *Bangerz*, the season's two other big pop records. An infamous and dubiously sourced Examiner.com article claimed that Interscope lost \$25 million on the album, and that its dismal commercial performance led to layoffs at the label, but this information was later refuted by Gaga herself and the article was pulled.

Still, the story of the album's flop was irresistible to those who, after years of her cultural dominance, were getting a little sick of Gaga. And in that light, it was too easy to hear *Cheek to Cheek* as Gaga's abdication of the pop throne. A scathing Los Angeles Times review said it “sounds like a retreat,” suggesting that “she's merely run out of ideas for the moment and wants to cover it up with borrowed prestige.” Anyone who got too worked up about the record, though, was probably just waiting for an opportunity to indulge in some Gaga backlash. *Cheek to Cheek* was fun, fizzy, and unobtrusively minor—even if most of Gaga and Bennett's

televised performances of songs from the album found her hamminess drowning out his class-act restraint. But, love it or hate it, this element of camp is part and parcel when it comes to Gaga. (She has always had the air of someone who just might play Liza Minnelli in a biopic someday and who just might win a goddamn Oscar for it.)

At Radio City, predictably, the duets are the least enchanting parts of the evening. Their voices blend nicely, but Gaga's manic energy exists on a different plane from Bennett's cool repose. Her jokes, to him, don't even register as jokes. When Gaga gets to that “big reveal,” in which she tells Tony she's wearing one of his suits, she giggles like she's just asked him if his refrigerator is running. He chuckles mildly. Not exactly one for subtlety, Gaga later sneaks playfully onstage while he's singing and presents him with a silver, spangly garment. “I know you said you didn't want a dress,” she says, laughing, “but I figured maybe a pantsuit!” Bennett quietly places it atop the piano, and a few moments later an attendant comes to whisk it off the stage.

The whole “Gaga is going classy” narrative is probably just dooming her to misunderstanding—squeezing her into yet another box that doesn't quite fit. And anyway, she's been back in the studio with dance producer RedOne, crafting a record that's presumably more of a throw-back to *The Fame*. She'll also appear on the next season of *American Horror Story*, where she is sure to be cast in a freaky light.

The fact is: Lady Gaga has always been very talented, and Lady Gaga has always been sort of batshit. That's a great combination, and there's no reason to think this will change in the immediate future. My favorite recent headline about her, from the website Idolator, speaks volumes: “Lady Gaga Takes a Nude Selfie in an Infrared Sauna, Covers ‘La Vie en Rose’ Live.”

And yes, that song will stand as the most memorable performance from the Radio City show. She brings people in my row to tears, and there are audible gasps when she hits That Note at the end. She sings it like the powerhouse she is; it's somehow more ballsy than the Edith Piaf version and more conventionally beautiful than Grace Jones's. It might have taken Tony Bennett to get her here, singing this unlikely song in such a grand and dignified setting, but in this moment she doesn't need him. Gaga's always been a duet between the masculine and feminine elements of herself, existing in a cultural moment in which we're all suddenly allowed to admit there's nothing weird about that. ■

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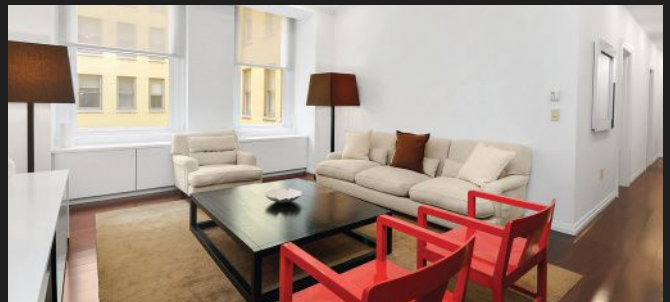
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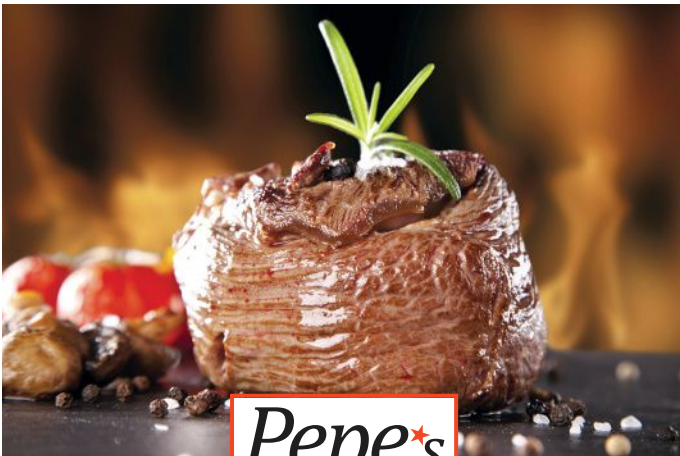
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EVENT

Bloomingdale's Summer Soirée

On June 18, *New York* magazine teamed up with Bloomingdale's to host a summer-themed party that kicked off the start of the season. On the Home floor of Bloomingdale's 59th Street location, guests enjoyed a photo booth and art projects as they shopped for summer home décor.

► bloomingdales.com/summerparties

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EVENT

Macy's Denim Bar Launch

On June 12, *New York* magazine collaborated with Macy's to host a reception to celebrate the opening of Macy's Men's Denim Bar. Held in Macy's Herald Square location during their Men's Style Night, the event featured notable DJ Alex Merrell to ensure the guests were entertained while they shopped for new denim styles.

► macys.com/events



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EVENT

Join *The Cut's* Kathleen Hou for a Good Cause at National Beauty Editors Day

Visit lookgoodfeelbetter.org/register to schedule a sit-down with *The Cut's* Senior Beauty Editor Kathleen Hou on National Beauty Editors' Day (Thursday, August 6) at Saks Fifth Avenue in NYC. For just \$40, you'll receive exclusive beauty tips from Kathleen, along with a makeover and a free, full-sized gift from the beauty brand of your choice! All event proceeds will go to the Look Good Feel Better program to help cancer patients feel beautiful during treatment.

► lookgoodfeelbetter.org/register



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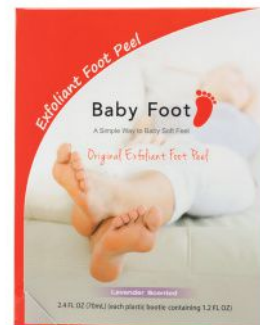
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Before



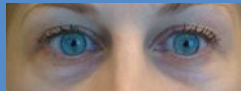
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Hersh has also been featured by national media, including the *Today Show*, *PBS*, *Fox News*, *People* magazine, and *The New York Times*. *America's Top Doctors* has included

him in their list of recommended specialists every year for more than a decade.

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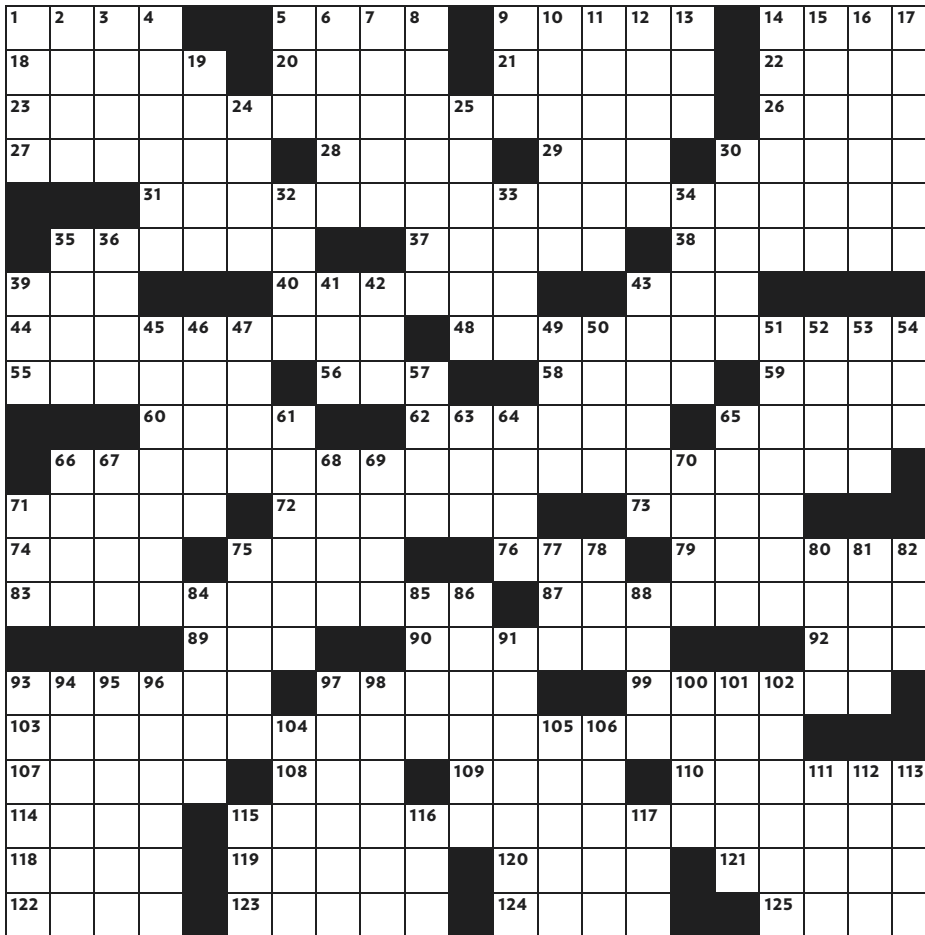


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Caesar's Grand Finale

New York Crossword by Cathy Allis



Across

- 1 "___ girl!"
- 5 Biblical kingdom in what is now Jordan
- 9 Comprehension
- 14 Masterwork
- 18 Cardinal point in orienteering
- 20 Sicilian erupter
- 21 Basil-based sauce
- 22 ___ Blanc, in les Alpes
- 23 Seuss character learns an objective interrogative?
- 26 Latin 101 infinitive
- 27 Weather phase phrase
- 28 "Casablanca" café owner
- 29 Prefix with dermis
- 30 Figure skater Slutskaya
- 31 Brooklyn Blackbirds' university did in some opponents?
- 35 U.S. capital and surrounds
- 37 Early nuke trial
- 38 Necklace fasteners
- 39 Media co. that bought MapQuest in 2000
- 40 Historic army post in 35-Across
- 43 NFL's Browns, on scoreboards

- 44 Sacred sound's background, à la one racy novel?
- 48 Actor Kirk, toned up?
- 55 Lofty regard
- 56 Horror-film director Craven
- 58 Dig, as a pig
- 59 Adored celebrity
- 60 French-door section
- 62 Plains tribe
- 65 Double Stuf cookies
- 66 Devil's costume mishap?
- 71 "Dona ___ Pacem" (Mass phrase)
- 72 Consignment-shop transaction
- 73 Just average
- 74 Comparable
- 75 Vittles
- 76 Prefix with Atlantic
- 79 Vary
- 83 Apt camera effect for a sex tape's start?
- 87 Living-will template?
- 89 Digit often tapped
- 90 Club for miniature golf
- 92 Bronze, in part
- 93 Run of luck
- 97 Tomorrow's T-bone

- 99 Director's cry
- 103 2007 film in which a congressman's feeling the heat?
- 107 Program-failure option
- 108 Opposite of neg.
- 109 Feast where poi is served
- 110 Result in
- 114 Inner: prefix
- 115 Pray in the hay?
- 118 Taiwanese computer company
- 119 Make sense
- 120 Cézanne's summers
- 121 Actress Shire of "Rocky"
- 122 Some are OTC
- 123 Approvals
- 124 Actress Gilbert or Ramirez
- 125 Gas in Vegas signs

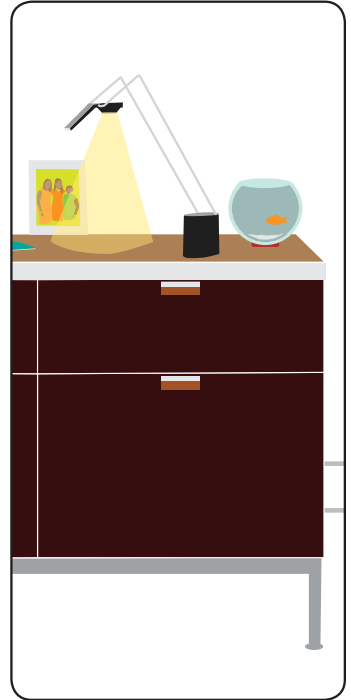
Down

- 1 "Off the Court" author Arthur
- 2 Awl, for one
- 3 Go sour
- 4 No hon, this Hun
- 5 Interjection of apathy
- 6 Cheri formerly of "SNL"
- 7 Diarist Nin
- 8 Surname in British banking

- 9 Transcript fig.
- 10 Begins a new marriage
- 11 Fireplace receptacle
- 12 Unflinching
- 13 Fluffy lapdog, briefly
- 14 Mafia code of silence
- 15 Bouquets
- 16 Loosen, as a onesie
- 17 Really riles
- 19 Accolade
- 24 Zilch
- 25 Emulated Johnny Weir
- 30 Runs in neutral
- 32 Fishing hook with a handle
- 33 Claudius's successor
- 34 Razzle-dazzle
- 35 Wii pair?
- 36 Congeal
- 39 Enzyme suffix
- 41 Give a wagon ride, say
- 42 Marseilles Mrs.
- 43 Wraps up
- 45 Unrevised later edition
- 46 Nobel poet from Dublin
- 47 Hyatt alternative
- 49 Compulsion
- 50 Attendee
- 51 Write and send hurriedly
- 52 Cerebral seed
- 53 Share quarters
- 54 New York Red Bulls' org.
- 57 Spot for binge-watching
- 61 Fill with wrath
- 63 The Cards, cut?
- 64 "Uh, my turn to talk"
- 65 Davis of "Do the Right Thing"
- 66 Jab
- 67 Somewhat
- 68 Sax player Stan
- 69 ___ buco (veal dish)
- 70 Fayed who died with Di
- 71 Doze
- 75 Japanese mushroom
- 77 Addams-family cousin
- 78 She's a deer
- 80 Pic, commercially
- 81 Ireland, poetically
- 82 LBJ's successor
- 84 Where the Po flows
- 85 German automaker
- 86 Oaty breakfast mix
- 88 Attract
- 91 Touring performance companies
- 93 Edward Munch subject
- 94 From that point
- 95 Snitched
- 96 Goofs
- 97 Sabers and scimitars
- 98 Puffs piece
- 100 Serene
- 101 Doggy goody
- 102 "Your talent's awesome!"
- 104 Horatian poem form
- 105 U.S.-Can.-Mex. pact
- 106 More confident
- 111 NASCAR Hall of Famer Earnhardt
- 112 The Dixie Chicks, e.g.
- 113 Arabian Peninsula sultanate
- 115 Path
- 116 Some PCs and printers
- 117 She-bear: Sp.

JULY 13-26, 2015, VOL. 48, NO. 15. New York Magazine (ISSN 0028-7369) is published biweekly (except for one bonus issue in June and two bonus issues in November) plus two special issues: Summer Weddings (March) and Winter Weddings (October), by New York Media LLC, 75 Varick Street, New York, NY 10013. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and additional mailing offices. Editorial and business offices: 212-508-0700. Postmaster: Send address changes to New York, P.O. Box 62240, Tampa, FL 33662-2240. Canada Post International Publications Mail Product (Canadian Distribution) Sales Agreement No. 40612608. Canada returns to be sent to Inex Global Solutions, P.O. Box 25542, London, ON N6C 4B2. Subscription rates in the U.S. and possessions: 29 issues, \$59.97. For subscription assistance, write to New York Magazine Subscription Department, P.O. Box 62240, Tampa, FL 33662-2240, or call 800-678-0900. Printed in the U.S.A. Copyright © 2015 by New York Media LLC. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is strictly prohibited. Founding chairman, Bruce Wasserstein, chief executive officer, Anup Bagaria. New York Magazine is not responsible for the return or loss of unsolicited manuscripts. Any submission of a manuscript must be accompanied by a SASE.

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THE APPROVAL MATRIX

Our deliberately oversimplified guide to who falls where on our taste hierarchies.

HIGHBROW



Let's hope the Greek euro crisis ends better than the movie **300**.

Per the N.Y. State attorney general's office, **pricey Per Se** cheated some of its staff out of tips.



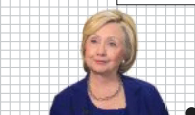
Why does the Freedom Tower appear to be covered in patches of **slightly mismatched** glass?

Novelist Chad Kultgen's book-promo site, *prolifeantiwoman.com*, where he posed as a woman wanting to get paid to **not have an abortion**.

Shhhh! The glorious Rose Main Reading Room atop the NYPL will be closed until 2017.



Antiquities almost certainly **looted by ISIS** are being sold openly in shops in central London.



Hillary doesn't see the point of talking to the **pesky** press ...



A masked "hoax heist" protest at London's National Portrait Gallery **terrifies** art-viewing public.

Paul Rudolph's Brutalist classic Orange County Government Center to get "**renovated**."



Cyber-apocalypse paranoia! **Oris it...**



... Meanwhile, Jeb Bush has (smartly, strategically) decided to treat the press like they're **useful**.

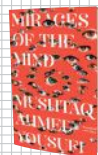
ABT **nabs** Jeffrey Cirio of Boston Ballet to be a new soloist.

The Nation is 150. (Talking Points Memo probably won't **last** that long.)



The exhibition on the activist group **the Young Lords** at El Museo del Barrio, the Bronx Museum of the Arts, and Loisaida Inc.

You can finally read **Mirages of the Mind**, by Pakistani comic novelist Mushtaq Ahmed Yousufi, in translation.



The "Lost Cause" is, **at last**, a lost cause.



The Studio Museum in Harlem's David Adjaye-designed **expansion plan**.



Leon Neyfakh's book on artistic envy, *The Next Next Level*, about the sort-of-nobody rapper **Juiceboxxxx** (whom he happens to know).



Tim Weiner's **rigorously damning** *One Man Against the World: The Tragedy of Richard Nixon*.



Ryan Gander's **clever** bronze *Zooming Out/Toodaloo* on the High Line.

Heather Dewey-Hagborg's **bonkers** *New Inquiry* essay about genetic profiling.

DESPICABLE



That *Hand to God* audience member who tried to charge his cell phone onstage. (Tyronne should have **bitten** him!)



Tom Selleck accused of **repeatedly illegally** tapping a SoCal fire hydrant. Maybe he should move back to live with Higgins in still-verdant Hawaii.



The (briefly tweeted) photo of Paula Deen as Lucy and her son as, uh, **unnaturally** tanned.

It's stinky-sweaty **young-junkies-nodding-off-on-the-sidewalk** season again in the East Village!



Michael Eisner's **hilarious** observation that "beautiful women ... are not funny."

... That's also more or less the plot of that new Ed Snowden-meets-**Tyler Durden** TV show, *Mr. Robot*.



MTV's *Scream* TV show: If everybody is so relentlessly teen-pretty, how do we know who **deserves to die**?



The average sale price for a Manhattan apartment: **\$1.87 million** (11 percent higher than a year ago).

Russian gov't forced to warn reckless Russians that "a **cool selfie** could cost you your life."

BRILLIANT

Richard C. Martinez and Jeff Weiss's underground classic ... *And That's How the Rent Gets Paid* gets **reheated** at the Kitchen.



• **Bartkira**: the mash-up of anime epic *Akira* and characters from *The Simpsons*.



There will be a movie about a young Han Solo. We hope he and Chewbacca **met cute!**



• **Fun** summer shoes!

Susannah Mushatt Jones, 116, is the **world's oldest** (and proof that not everyone in Brooklyn is a "young creative" who lives off their parents).



According to a University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University study, doing **small acts of kindness** reduces social anxiety.



The Phoenix Foundation's sardonic, **self-pitying** pop ditty "Give Up Your Dreams."



Lafayette's artisanal **tutti-frutti** push pop.



Gallant's **sultry**, triumphant single "Weight in Gold."



Beirut's **wonderfully goofy** "No No No" video.



Chrissy Teigen's **now-legendary** single of John Legend's butt.

LOWBROW

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BIG FAB FUN

PHOTO BY JOSH LEHRER



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